

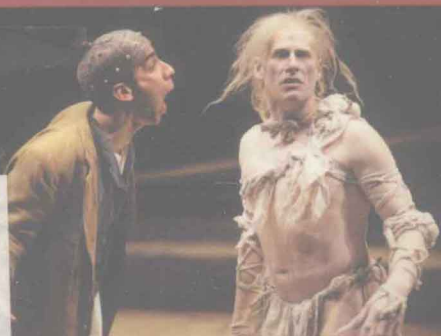
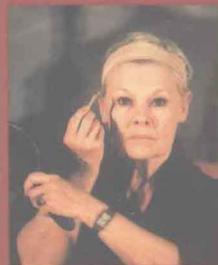
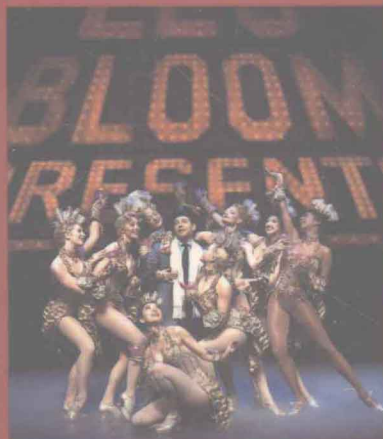
..... Robert Cohen



Theatre Brief Version



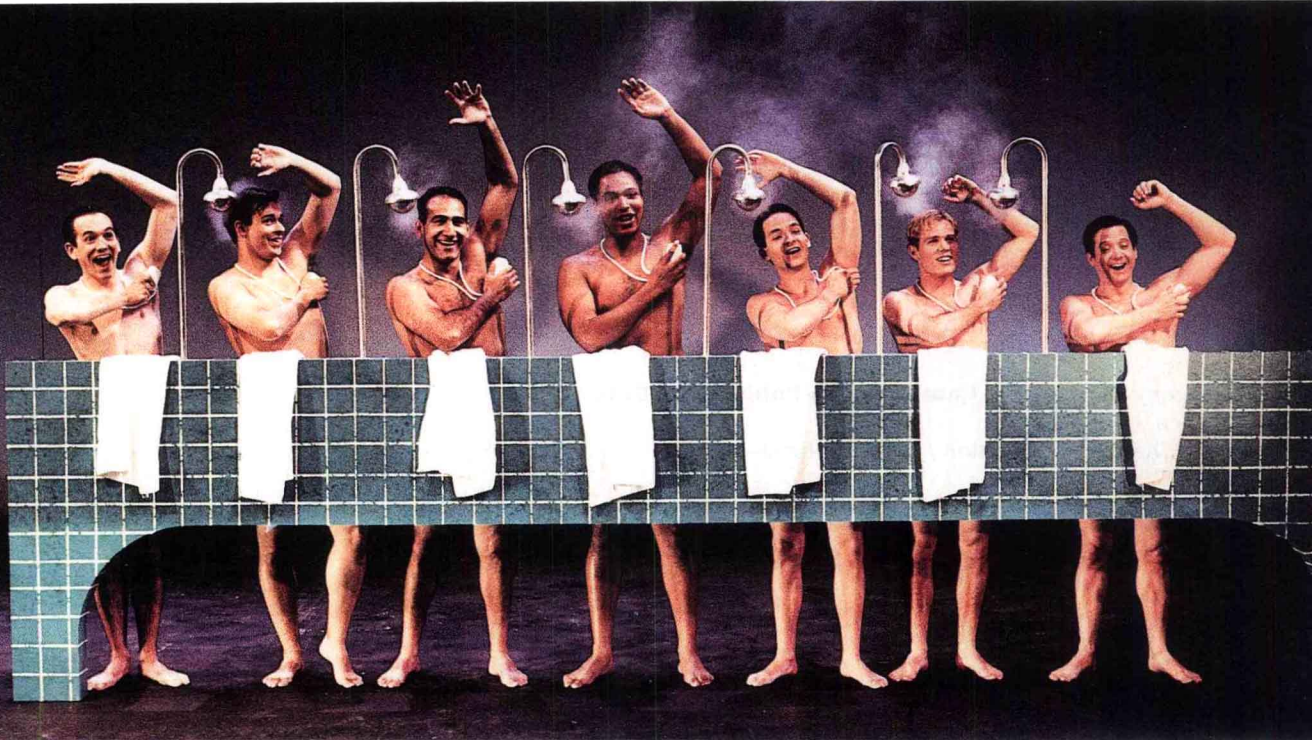
Sixth Edition



Theatre

Brief Version

SIXTH EDITION



ROBERT COHEN

*Claire Trevor Professor of Drama
University of California, Irvine*

**Mc
Graw
Hill**

Boston Burr Ridge, IL Dubuque, IA Madison, WI New York
San Francisco St. Louis Bangkok Bogotá Caracas Kuala Lumpur
Lisbon London Madrid Mexico City Milan Montreal New Delhi
Santiago Seoul Singapore Sydney Taipei Toronto

Copyright © 2003, 2000, 1997, 1994, 1988, 1981 by Robert Cohen. All rights reserved. Printed in the United States of America. Except as permitted under the United States Copyright Act of 1976, no part of this publication may be reproduced or distributed in any form or by any means, or stored in a database or retrieval system, without the prior written permission of the publisher.

2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 0 VNH/VNH 0 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Cohen, Robert

Theatre : brief version / Robert Cohen.—6th ed.

p. cm.

Includes bibliographical references and index.

ISBN 0-7674-3007-7

1. Theater. I. Title.

PN2101 .C632 2002

792—dc21

2002016543

Sponsoring editor, Allison McNamara; *production editor*, Jennifer Mills; *manuscript editor*, Margaret Moore; *design manager*, Jeanne Schreiber; *cover designer*, Susan Breitbard; *art manager*, Robin Mouat; *photo researcher*, Brian J. Pecko; *manufacturing manager*, Pam Augspurger. This text was set in 9.5/12 Stone Serif Regular by Thompson Type and printed on acid-free, 45# Pub Matte by VonHoffmann Press.

Cover images: Top left, *The Lantern Acrobat*, courtesy Press Office, Hong Kong Kultural Centre, Serene Lai; top right, *Hamlet*, © Stephanie Berger; middle left, *When We Dead Awaken*, © Richard Feldman; middle, *The Producers*, © Paul Kolnik; middle right, *Amy's View*, © Joan Marcus; bottom left, *The Tempest*, © David Cooper; bottom right, *The Blue Room*, © Robbie Jack/Corbis.

Credits appear on a continuation of the copyright page, pages C-1–C-3.

Preface

I am sitting in a darkened theatre correcting the galley sheets for the book you are about to read. A technical rehearsal for a play I am directing is in progress; I am seated at a make-shift desk in the back of the house, my reading illuminated by a tiny covered gooseneck lamp. Onstage stand several actors, silent and motionless, as light plays over their faces and bodies. Above me, unseen and unheard, technicians operate, adjust, and record the settings for another of the play's hundred and fifty light cues. To the outside observer, it is the dulllest situation imaginable; nothing observable happens for twenty or thirty minutes at a stretch. A pool of light intensifies and then recedes, muffled conversation crackles over headsets, footsteps clang on steel catwalks lacing the ceiling, and a spotlight is carefully repositioned. This has been going on now since eight in the morning, and it is already past dinnertime.

And yet my eye is continually pulled from these pages to the dance of light upon the stage. The violet and amber hues are rich with color, and the sharp shafts of incandescence dazzle with brilliance. I am fascinated by the patient weariness of the actors, alternately glowing in and then shadowed by the lights, endlessly holding the positions that, in performance, they will occupy for only a few transitory seconds. I gaze with admiration at the followspot operator, his hands gloved, as he handles his instrument with the precision and sensitivity of a surgeon.

The silence, the stasis, is hypnotic. All is quiet but profound with held-back beats, in-

cipient torrents of passion and exhilaration. The potential is riveting—I am alive with excitement—and I look back to these cold galley sheets with alarm.

How can I have thought to express the thrill of the theatre in these pages? How can I have hoped to make recognizable the joy and awe I feel in theatrical involvement?

The theatre is not merely a collection of crafts, a branch of literature, a collaboration of technique, or even an all-encompassing art form. It is a life. It is people. It is people making art out of themselves. Its full reality transcends by light-years anything that could be said or written about it.

What I have tried to do in these pages is not so much to introduce the theatre or to survey it as to *present* the theatre with its liveliness and humanness intact, with its incipient passion and exhilaration always present, with its potential for joy, awe, wisdom, and excitement as clear to the reader as they have been made clear to me.

Features

This is a brief version of a larger book that is published simultaneously. The larger volume includes five chapters on theatrical history that do not appear here and three chapters (instead of two) on the modern theatre. The goal of this brief version is to provide students surveying the theatrical arts and collaborative theatrical crafts—but not dramatic history—with a comprehensive text in the dramatic arts as they exist today.

I have included more than 200 theatre photographs—mostly in color—collected from all five continents. The vast majority of these are of significant recent stage productions from around the world. Other photos illustrate the processes of theatrical creation or the historical and current contexts of theatre presentation. Completing the book's art are a dozen drawings by scholar/architects that illustrate theatres both past and present as accurately as current research and skilled reconstruction can make possible. Extended captions should help readers better appreciate these images of theatre worldwide and make stronger connections to the text examples.

The text offers a number of pedagogical aids. Terms commonly used in theatre and theatre history are defined in the glossary at the back of the book, and further sources of information for the curious can be found in the selected bibliography. To help students enjoy performances, I have included an appendix that offers advice on observing and writing critically about plays.

To help students enhance their playgoing experience further, we have prepared a brief guide—*Enjoy the Play!* Co-authored with Lorna Cohen, the guide includes suggestions as to how and where students may attend live theatre—at low cost—either in their own hometowns or in major theatre centers here and abroad. It also includes pointers on how to write a play report.

To help busy instructors, there is a Test Bank, written by Marilyn Moriarty, which includes 50 multiple-choice questions and several short-answer or essay questions per chapter. A computerized version of the Test Bank is available to qualified adopters.

No study of the theatre can be truly comprehensive without seeing and reading plays. It is my belief that regular playgoing and play reading, supported by the discussions in these pages and in the classroom, will provide a good foundation for the student to develop an in-

formed and critical enthusiasm for the art of drama.

What's New?

For this edition, the chapter on "Theatre Today" has, naturally, been completely revised, with new and substantially augmented sections on dance theatre, performance art, and important trends and emerging artists in America and Europe. Chapters on musical theatre and playwriting have also been substantially revised and modestly expanded, and the photo essays on Tony Award-winning scenery and costume designers have now expanded from two to three, with a new one on lighting designer Chris Parry. Readers of the previous edition will also immediately notice more than seventy-five new color photographs of important stage productions, mostly from the current millennium, which have been individually selected from studios of leading theatre photographers in Europe and America. And, naturally, the scholarship and reportage in virtually every chapter in the book has been updated and, where necessary, corrected.

Acknowledgments

In all of these revisions, I have profited from literally hundreds of valuable suggestions from readers and from a dozen reviews solicited by the publisher from around the country. These include: Joe Aldridge, University of Nevada at Las Vegas; Carol Burbank, University of Maryland; George Caldwell, Washington State University; Kurt Daw, Kennesaw State University; Richard Devin, University of Colorado; Cliff Faulkner, University of California at Irvine; Stephen Hancock, University of Memphis; Mark Harvey, University of Minnesota; Richard Isackes, University of Texas at Austin; Robert Gerald Levy, Clarion University of Pennsylvania; Diane McNeil, University of Rhode Island; Dean Mogle, College Conservatory of

Music, University of Cincinnati; Rebecca Morrice, Slippery Rock University; C. Ronald Olason, Mankato State University; Mikell Pinkney, University of Florida; Rebecca Rumbo, University of Connecticut; Terry Donovan Smith, University of Washington; Jeffrey Stephens, Oklahoma State University; Janet Swenson, Brigham Young University; and Edmond Williams, University of Alabama.

I am also deeply grateful for the counsel of my University of California colleagues Madeleine Kozlowski and Cameron Harvey (at Irvine) and John Rouse and Chris Parry (at San Diego), in addition to the collaborative assistance of many people in acquiring the new photographs for this edition, including Laurencine Lot at the Comédie Française in Paris; Jagoda Engelbrecht at the Berlin Theatertreffen 2001; Charlotte Webb at the Performing Arts Library in London; Amy Richards at the Oregon Shakespeare Festival; James Loder at A Conservatory Theatre in Seattle; Julia Oberschneider at the Berliner Ensemble; Ana Sokol at Gale Gates et al. in New York; Ann B. Goddard at the Utah Shakespearean Theatre; Thomas Aurin in Berlin; Barbara Higgs at the Zurich Schauspielhaus; Carol Rosegg, Joan Marcus, Paul Kolnik, and Stephanie Berger in New York; Gina Lutterman at the Goodman Theatre in Chicago; Barbara Schindler at the Berliner Volksbühne; Cris Gross at South Coast Repertory; and David Lincecum and Shannon Forcier at ETC Products.

Finally, I would like to note that this edition is the first I have conceived and written entirely under the guidance of McGraw-Hill Higher Education, which in 2001 absorbed Mayfield Publishing Company with which I published not only the five previous editions of *Theatre* and *Theatre: Brief Version* but also fourteen editions of seven other books during the past thirty years. One hardly expects such transitions to be seamless, but this one proved to be exactly that, and for that I am profoundly grateful to this edition's astute Sponsoring

Editor, Allison McNamara, whose steadfast counsel and encouragement have proved extraordinary, as did that of the entire publishing team, many of whom moved over from Mayfield. This team included the very careful Margaret Moore, whose copyediting saved me (and you) from a great many egregious mistakes; the resourceful Brian Pecko, who sorted out all the photographic permissions from several countries; the artful Robin Mouat who coordinated the art and photo program; and the book's masterful assembler, Production Editor Jen Mills.

Support for Instructors

Please note: The supplements listed here and below in Support for Students may accompany this text. Please contact your local McGraw-Hill representative for details concerning policies, prices, and availability as some restrictions may apply. If you are not sure who your representative is, you can find him or her by using the Rep Locator at www.mhhe.com.

INSTRUCTOR'S MANUAL McGraw-Hill offers an *Instructor's Manual* to all instructors who adopt *Theatre, Brief Version* for their courses. Each chapter of the *Instructor's Manual* includes:

- an overview and outline of the text chapter
- a list of significant names and terms found in the chapter
- questions for student essays or discussions

The last section of the *Instructor's Manual* contains a sample *Test Bank*, organized by chapter, for in-class quizzes and testing.

COMPUTERIZED TEST BANK The test questions from the *Instructor's Manual* are available on MicroTest, a powerful but easy-to-use test-generating program. MicroTest is available for Windows and Macintosh personal computers. With MicroTest, you can easily view and

select the test item file questions, then print a test and answer key. You can customize questions, headings, and instructions, you can add or import questions of your own, and you can print your test in a choice of fonts allowed by your printer.

ONLINE LEARNING CENTER: WWW.MHHE.COM/COHEN The Online Learning Center is an Internet-based resource for students and faculty alike. The Instructor Resources are password protected and offer the complete text of the *Instructor's Manual* and a link to our customizable database of plays. To receive a password for the site, contact your local sales representative or email us at theatre@mcgraw-hill.com.

Additionally, the Online Learning Center offers chapter-by-chapter quizzes for student testing. These brief quizzes are separate from those offered in the *Instructor's Manual*, generate instant grades, and the results can be emailed directly to the instructor with the click of a button (see Student Resources below). This special quizzing feature is a valuable tool for the instructor who requires a quick way to check reading comprehension and basic understanding without using up valuable class time.

Student Resources

MAKING THE GRADE CD-ROM This CD-ROM, packaged free with the text, provides students with an excellent resource that offers enrichment, review, and self-testing. The following components are included:

- Internet primer
- Study skills primer

- Guide to electronic research in theatre
- Multiple-choice questions for each chapter—graded automatically
- Learning assessment
- Links to the book's Web site

ENJOY THE PLAY! This free theatre guide is packaged with every copy of the text. From getting to the theatre to what to write in a theatre report, *Enjoy the Play!* is an excellent introduction to the art of attending a play.

ONLINE LEARNING CENTER: WWW.MHHE.COM/COHEN McGraw-Hill offers extensive Web resources for students with Internet access. Students will find the Online Learning Center of particular use with the sixth edition of *Theatre Brief Version*, as each chapter is equipped with: glossary terms, chapter objectives, discussion questions, and online testing. In addition, the site hosts links to promote getting involved in theatre and in conducting research on the Web.

THE MCGRAW-HILL GUIDE TO ELECTRONIC RESEARCH IN THEATRE This brief booklet is designed to assist students in locating theatre sites on the Web, evaluating the onsite information, and provides guidelines for referencing online sources. This supplement can be packaged with the text for free.

I would like to express my appreciation to Doug Cummins of Furman University for his contributions to the *Making the Grade* CD-ROM and the Online Learning Center and Dennis Beck of Bradley University for creating the *Instructor's Manual*.

Contents

PREFACE vii

INTRODUCTION 1

Chapter 1 **What Is the Theatre?** 7

The Theatre Building 8

The Company, or Troupe, of Players 10

The Occupation of Theatre 11

Work 12

Art 16

Impersonation 16

Performance 19

Chapter 2 **What Is a Play?** 29

Classifying Plays 30

Duration 30

Genre 31

Structure 39

The Components of a Play 39

The Order of a Play 44

Chapter 3 **The Actor** 53

What Is Acting? 54

The Two Notions of Acting 54

Virtuosity 60

Magic 63

Becoming an Actor 64

The Actor's Instrument 64

The Actor's Approach 70

<i>The Actor's Routine</i>	72
The Audition	72
The Rehearsal	74
The Performance	75
<i>The Actor in Life</i>	77

Chapter 4 **The Playwright** 79

<i>We Are All Playwrights</i>	80
<i>The Playwright's Career</i>	81
<i>Literary and Nonliterary Aspects of Playwriting</i>	83
<i>Playwriting as Event Writing</i>	83
<i>The Qualities of a Fine Play</i>	86
Credibility and Intrigue	86
Speakability, Stageability, and Flow	89
Richness	91
Depth of Characterization	92
Gravity and Pertinence	93
Compression, Economy, and Intensity	94
Celebration	96
<i>The Playwright's Process</i>	96
Dialogue	97
Conflict	97
Structure	98
<i>The Playwright's Rewards</i>	98
<i>Contemporary American Playwrights</i>	99
Arthur Miller	99
Neil Simon	100
Edward Albee	101
Lanford Wilson	102
John Guare	103
Terrence McNally	104
Sam Shepard	104
August Wilson	105
David Mamet	106
Wendy Wasserstein	107
Paula Vogel	108
Beth Henley	109
George C. Wolfe	109
Tony Kushner	110

David Henry Hwang	111
Margaret Edson	113
Suzan-Lori Parks	114

Chapter 5 **Designers and Technicians** 117

<i>Theatre Architecture</i>	118
Staging Formats	120
Other Architectural Considerations	122

<i>Scenery</i>	124
Scenic Materials	129
The Scene Designer at Work	133

PHOTO ESSAY: BROADWAY DESIGNER TONY WALTON 134

<i>Lighting</i>	137
Modern Lighting Design	139
The Lighting Designer at Work	140

PHOTO ESSAY: CHRIS PARRY, LIGHTING DESIGNER 142

<i>Costume</i>	147
The Functions of Costume	147
The Costume Designer at Work	149

PHOTO ESSAY: BROADWAY DESIGNER PATRICIA ZIPPRODT 154

<i>Makeup</i>	157
<i>Sound Design</i>	161
<i>Special Effects</i>	162
<i>Computer Technologies in Theatre Design</i>	162
<i>Technical Production</i>	165

Chapter 6 **The Director** 169

<i>The Arrival of the Director:</i>	
<i>A Historical Overview</i>	171
Phase One: The Teacher-Directors	171
Phase Two: The Realistic Directors	171
Phase Three: The Stylizing Directors	172
The Contemporary Director	174

<i>Directorial Functions</i>	174
Producer and Director	175
Directorial Vision	175
Preparatory Phase	176
PHOTO ESSAY: MAKING THEATRE – A PLAY IS PUT TOGETHER	182
Implementation Phase	200
<i>The Training of a Director</i>	209

Chapter 7 **Theatre Traditions: East and West** 211

<i>The Origins of Theatre</i>	212
<i>Recorded Drama</i>	214
<i>Theatre in the West</i>	215
Greek Drama	215
Roman Drama	219
Medieval Drama	219
Renaissance Drama	222
The Royal Theatre	227
The Romantic Theatre	229
<i>Theatre in the East</i>	229
Indian Sanskrit Drama	231
Indian Kathakali	231
Japanese Nō	232
Japanese Kabuki	234
Chinese Xiqu	236
<i>The Theatrical Tradition Today: East and West</i>	240

Chapter 8 **The Modern Theatre** 241

<i>Realism</i>	242
A Laboratory	243
Pioneers of Realism	244
<i>Naturalism</i>	246
<i>Antirealism</i>	248
The Symbolist Rebellion	248
The Era of “Isms”	251
Stylized Theatre	252

Chapter 9 **The Musical Theatre** 277

The Development of the Broadway Musical:

America's Contribution 279

The First Phase of the Golden Age:

Musical Comedy 280

The Second Phase of the Golden Age:

Musical Drama 281

The Contemporary Musical 286

The Emergence of Choreographer-Directors:

Jerome Robbins, Gower Champion, Bob Fosse,

Tommy Tune, Michael Bennett 287

Stephen Sondheim 288

European Musicals 290

Mel Brooks: *The Producers* 291

Directions in the Modern Musical 293

Chapter 10 **Theatre Today: What, Who, and Where?** 297

What's Happening? 297

The Modern and the Postmodern 298

The Directions of Today's Theatre 299

A Theatre of Postmodern Experiment 299

A Nonlinear Theatre 303

A Theatre of the Senses 306

An Open Theatre 308

A Theatre By and About Women 309

A Theatre of Ethnic Diversity 310

A Theatre of Difference 315

A Theatre of Nontraditional Casting 318

A Dangerous Theatre 319

A Theatre of Revival 321

Who's Doing Today's Theatre? 323

Robert Wilson, Michael Counts,

and Performance Art 323

Susan Stroman, Matthew Bourne:

Dance Theatre and Dance Play 328

Stomp, Blue Man Group, De La Guarda:

Movement Art 332

Sherry Glaser, John Leguizamo, Karen Finley,

Spaulding Gray, Eric Bogosian, Anna Deveare

Smith, Danny Hoch: Solo Performance 333

Two American Directors: Julie Taymor and Mary Zimmerman	336
Four European Directors: Peter Brook, Ariane Mnouchkine, Frank Castorf, Christoph Marthaler	339
<i>Theatre of Today: Where Can You Find It?</i>	347
Broadway	347
Off-Broadway and Off-Off-Broadway	348
The Nonprofit Professional Theatre	350
Shakespeare Festivals	355
Summer and Dinner Theatres	355
Amateur Theatre: Academic and Community	356
International Theatre	358
<i>Conclusions on the Current Theatre?</i>	363

Chapter II **The Critic** 365

<i>Critical Perspectives</i>	366
A Play's Relation to Society	366
A Play's Relation to the Individual	368
A Play's Relation to Art	368
A Play's Relation to Theatre	370
A Play as Entertainment	370
<i>Critical Focus</i>	371
Professional Criticism	371
Student Criticism	376
<i>We Are the Critics</i>	376

APPENDIX: WRITING ON THEATRE A-1

GLOSSARY G-1

SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY B-1

CREDITS C-1

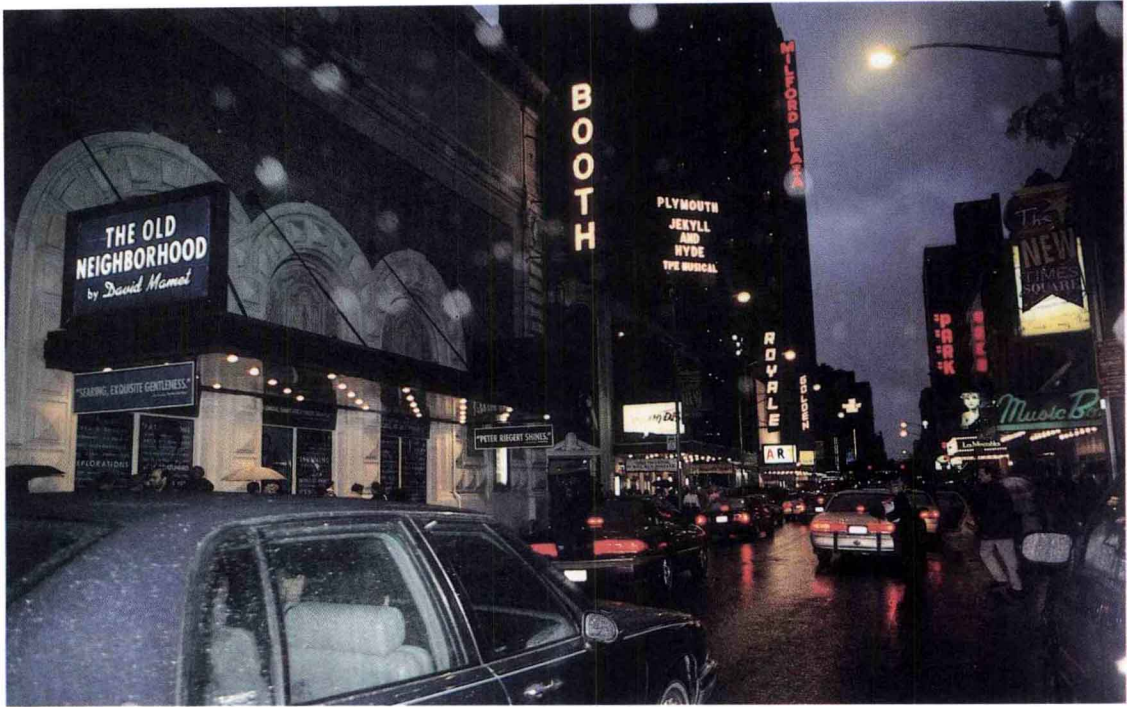
INDEX I-1



Introduction

It is evening in Manhattan. On Broadway and the streets that cross it — from 42nd to 54th — marquees light up, “Performance Tonight” signs materialize in front of double doors, and beneath a few box-office windows placards announce “This Performance Completely Sold Out.” At Grand Central and Penn Stations, trains disgorge suburbanites from Greenwich, Larchmont, and Trenton; students from New Haven and Philadelphia; day-trippers from Boston and Washington. Up from the Times Square subways troop denizens of the island city and the neighboring boroughs. At the Duffy Square “TKTS” booth, hundreds line up to buy the discount tickets that go on sale a few hours before curtain time for those shows with seats yet to be filled. Now, converging on these few midtown blocks of America’s largest city, come limousines, restaurant buses, private cars, and taxis, whose drivers search for a curbside slot to deposit their riders among the milling throng of pedestrians. Financiers and dowagers, bearded intellectuals, backpack-toting teenagers, sleek executives, hip Harlemites, arm-in-arm widows, out-of-town tourists and conventioners, between-engagement actors, celebrities, honeymooners, and the precocious young — all commingle in this bizarre aggregation that is the New York Broadway audience. Even during (and perhaps *especially* during) troubled times in this vibrant city, it is as bright, bold, and varied a crowd as is likely to assemble at any single place in America.

It is eight o’clock. In close to forty theatres within two dozen blocks of each other, houselights dim, curtains rise, and spotlights



About three dozen theatres line the streets of a mere two blocks in midtown Manhattan; five of them – the Booth, the Plymouth, the Royale, the Music Box, and the Martin Beck – are shown here in a single half block of 45th Street. Most Broadway theatres date from the beginning of the twentieth century, and several are currently being restored. This convergence of playhouses makes Broadway the most concentrated – and consequently the most lively – theatre district in the world.

pick out performers whose lives center on this moment. Here a new musical, here a star-studded revival of an American classic, here a contemporary English comedy from London's West End, here a new play fresh from its electrifying Seattle or Atlanta premiere, here a one-woman show, here an off-Broadway hit moving to larger quarters, here a new avant-garde dance-drama, here a touring production from eastern Europe, and here the new play everyone expects will capture this year's coveted Pulitzer Prize. The hours pass.

Eleven o'clock. Pandemonium. All the double doors open simultaneously, as if on cue, and once again the thousands pour out into the night. At nearby restaurants, waiters stand by to receive the after-theatre onslaught. In Sardi's private upstairs room, an opening-night

cast party gets under way; downstairs, the patrons rehash the evening's entertainment and sneak covert glances at the celebrities around them and the actors heading for the upstairs sanctuary: there to await the reviews that will determine whether they will be employed next week or back on the street looking for new jobs.

Now let's turn back the clock. It is dawn in Athens, the thirteenth day of the month of Elaphebolion in the year 458 B.C. From thousands of low mud-bricked homes in the city, from the central agora, from temples and agricultural outposts, streams of Athenians and visitors converge upon the south slope of the Acropolis. Bundled against the morning's dampness, carrying with them breakfast figs and flagons of wine, they pay their tokens at

the entrance to the great Theatre of Dionysus and take their places in the seating spaces allotted them. Each tribe occupies a separate area. They have gathered for the Great Dionysian festival, which celebrates the greening of the land, the rebirth of vegetation, and the long sunny days that stretch ahead. It is a time for revelry, for rejoicing at fertility and all its fruits. And it is above all a time for the ultimate form of Dionysian worship: the theatre.

The open stone seats carved into the hillside fill up quickly. The crowd of 17,000 people here today comprises not only the majority of Athenian citizens but thousands of tradesmen, foreign visitors, slaves, and resident aliens as well. Even paupers are in attendance, thanks to the two obols apiece provided by a state fund to buy tickets for the poor; they take their place with the latecomers on the extremities of the *theatron*, as this first of theatres is called. Now, as the eastern sky grows pale, a masked and costumed actor appears atop a squat building set in full view of every spectator. A hush falls over the crowd, and the actor, his voice magnified by the wooden mask he wears, booms out this text:

I ask the gods some respite from the weariness
of this watchtime measured by years I lie
awake . . .

And the entranced crowd settles in, secure in the knowledge that today they are in good hands. Today they will hear and see a new version of a familiar story — the story of Agamemnon's homecoming and his murder, the revenge of that murder by his son Orestes, and the final disposition of justice in the case of Orestes' act — as told in the three tragedies that constitute *The Oresteia*. This magnificent trilogy is by Aeschylus, Athens's leading dramatist for more than forty years. The spectators watch closely, admiring but critical. Tomorrow they or their representatives will decide by vote whether the festival's prize should go to this work, or whether the young Sophocles, whose plays were presented in this space yesterday, had better sensed the true pulse of the

time. Even forty years later, the comic playwright Aristophanes will be arguing the merits and demerits of this day's work.

It is noon in London, and Queen Elizabeth I sits on the throne. Flags fly boldly atop three of the taller buildings in Bankside, across the Thames, announcing performance day at The Globe, The Rose, and The Swan. Boatmen have already begun ferrying theatre-bound Londoners across the river. Meanwhile, north of town, other flocks of Londoners are headed by foot and by carriage up to Finsbury Fields and the theatres of Shoreditch: The Fortune and The Curtain. And though public theatres have been banned within the city for some time now by action of the aldermen, an ensemble of trained schoolboys is rehearsing for a private candlelight performance before the queen in the royal palace.

Now, as the morning sermon concludes at St. Paul's Cathedral, traffic across the river increases. London Bridge fills with pedestrians hurrying to Bankside, where players at The Globe will present a new tragedy by Shakespeare (something called *Hamlet*, supposedly after an old play by Thomas Kyd). And The Rose promises a revival of the late Christopher Marlowe's *Dr. Faustus*. The noisy crowds swarm into the theatres, where the price of admission is a penny; another penny is needed for a pint of beer, and those who wish to go upstairs and take a seat on one of the benches in the gallery — the best place to see the action, both on the stage and off — must plunk down yet more pennies.

At The Globe, 2,000 spectators are on hand for the premiere. A trumpet sounds once, then again, and then builds into a full fanfare. The members of the audience exchange a few last winks with friends old and new — covert invitations to postperformance intimacies of various kinds — then turn their attention to the pillared platform stage. Through a giant door a guard bursts forth, lantern in hand. "Who's there?" he cries. Then through another door a voice responds, "Nay, answer me: stand

and unfold yourself," and another guard enters. In 2,000 imaginations, the bright afternoon has turned to midnight, Bankside has given way to the outskirts of Elsinore. And a shiver from the actors onstage sets up an answering chill among the audience as the second guard proclaims to the first, "'Tis bitter cold, and I am sick at heart." The audience strains forward. The new tragedy has begun.

It is 1629 in Edo (Tokyo), and the Shōgun has called together his advisors to discuss, with the utmost urgency, Japan's wildly popular *kabuki* drama. First performed by women in Kyoto, this explosive music-drama now employs performers of both sexes and has become fabulously licentious: "Men and women sing and dance together! Their lewd voices are clamorous, like the buzzing of flies and the crying of cicadas!" an outraged Confucian has reported. Somberly, the Shōgun delivers his edict: henceforward, kabuki can be performed only by males. Little does the Shōgun realize that his edict will be absolute law at least through to the next millennium.

It is 5 A.M. in Moscow, 1898. At a cafe in the shadow of the Kremlin wall, Konstantin Stanislavsky and Vladimir Nemirovich-Danchenko hotly discuss the wretched state of the current Russian theatre. It is too declamatory, they agree; it is also too insensitive, too shallow, too inartistic. Out of this all-night session the Moscow Art Theatre will be formed, bringing to the last days of czarist society the complex, gently ironic masterpieces of Chekhov and an acting style so natural as to astonish the world.

It is midnight in a basement in the East Village, or a warehouse in Brooklyn, or a campus rehearsal room, or a coffee shop in Pittsburgh, Seattle, Sioux Falls, or Berlin. Across one end of the room, a curtain has been drawn across a pole suspended by wires. It has been a long evening, but one play remains to be

seen. The author is unknown, but rumor has it that this new work is brutal, shocking, poetic, strange. The members of the audience, by turns skeptics and enthusiasts, look for the tenth time at their programs. The lights dim. Performers, backed by crudely painted packing crates, begin to act.

There is a common denominator in all of these scenes: they are all theatre. There is no culture that has not had a theatre in some form, for theatre is the art of people acting out — and giving witness to — their most pressing, most illuminating, and most inspiring concerns. Theatre is at once a showcase and a forum, a medium through which a society displays its ideas, fashions, moralities, and entertainments and debates its conflicts, dilemmas, and struggles. Theatre has provided a stage for political revolution, for social propaganda, for civil debate, for artistic expression, for religious conversion, for mass education, and even for its own self-criticism. It has been a performance ground for witch doctors, priests, intellectuals, poets, painters, technologists, militarists, philosophers, reformers, evangelists, prime ministers, jugglers, peasants, children, and kings. It has taken place in caves, in fields and forests, in circus tents, in inns and in castles, on street corners, and in public buildings grand and squalid all over the world. And it goes on incessantly in the minds of its authors, its actors, its producers, its designers, and its audiences.

For theatre is, above all, a *living* art form — a process, an event that is fluid in time, feeling, and experience. Theatre is not simply a matter of "plays" but also of "playing"; and a play is composed not simply of "acts" but also of "acting." Just as *play* and *act* are both noun and verb, so theatre is both a thing and a happening. It is continually forming, continually present in time. In fact, that very quality of "presentness" (or, in the actor's terminology, "stage presence") defines great theatrical performance.