

THE ESSENTIAL THEATRE

S E V E N T H E D I T I O N

OSCAR G. BROCKETT
WITH ROBERT J. BALL



THE ESSENTIAL THEATRE

Seventh Edition

Oscar G. Brockett

University of Texas at Austin

with

Robert J. Ball

Vanderbilt University

HARCOURT BRACE COLLEGE PUBLISHERS

Fort Worth Philadelphia San Diego New York Orlando Austin San Antonio
Toronto Montreal London Sydney Tokyo

Publisher: Earl McPeck
Executive Editor: David C. Tatom
Acquisitions Editor: Terry Johnson
Market Strategist: Laura Brennan
Project Editor: Travis Tyre
Art Director: Chris Morrow
Production Manager: Serena Barnett

Cover: © Richard Feldman, *A Midsummer Night's Dream* as performed
by The American Repertory Theatre.

ISBN: 0-15-507229-3

Library of Congress Catalog Card Number: 99-71580

Copyright © 2000 by Harcourt Brace Company

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced or
transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including
photocopy, recording, or any information storage and retrieval system,
without permission in writing from the publisher.

Requests for permission to make copies of any
part of the work should be mailed to:

Permissions Department
Harcourt Brace & Company
6277 Sea Harbor Drive
Orlando, FL 32887-6777.

Address for orders:

Harcourt Brace & Company
6277 Sea Harbor Drive
Orlando, FL 32887-6777
1-800-782-4479

Address for editorial correspondence:

Harcourt Brace College Publishers
301 Commerce Street, Suite 3700
Fort Worth, TX 76102

Web site address:

<http://www.hbcollege.com>

Printed in the United States of America

9 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 039 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2

THE ESSENTIAL THEATRE

SEVENTH EDITION


**HARCOURT
BRACE**

soon to become

 **Harcourt
College Publishers**

A Harcourt Higher Learning Company

Soon you will find Harcourt Brace's distinguished innovation, leadership, and support under a different name . . . a new brand that continues our unsurpassed quality, service, and commitment to education.

We are combining the strengths of our college imprints into one worldwide brand:  Harcourt. Our mission is to make learning accessible to anyone, anywhere, anytime—reinforcing our commitment to lifelong learning.

**We'll soon be Harcourt College Publishers.
Ask for us by name.**

**One Company
"Where Learning
Comes to Life."**

Preface

Behind this edition lies thirty-five years of publication; although *The Essential Theatre* was published first in 1976, it began as an abridged version of another book, *The Theatre: An Introduction*, which first appeared in 1964. *The Essential Theatre* has since taken on an identity of its own and is now in its seventh edition.

Like the earlier versions, this edition is divided into three parts. Within those parts, however, a number of changes have been made. In Part One, Chapter 2, "Performance, Audience, and Critic," has been considerably rewritten to address several issues more effectively, and the sample reviews have been omitted. In the chapters that make up Part Two, three of the plays discussed at length are new choices, and, although all of the chapters have been brought up to date, the final two chapters have had new material added. In Part Three, all the chapters have been partially rewritten and bolstered with new material to sharpen discussions and to respond to reactions from previous users. Many new illustrations have been added and integrated into the text. Along with updates to the bibliography, alterations have been made to the boxed materials that are scattered throughout the book. These boxes are used to give special emphasis to topics and/or pertinent persons, as well as to provide additional concrete details. Several of the boxes have been replaced by new ones; others have been revised or enlarged; and many additional boxes have been added.

We have assumed that those who use this book will both read plays and attend theatrical performances. Ideally, students should be able to read a script and then see a performance of that script. This is not always possible, but reading a play and seeing a performance, even if both are not of the same script, illustrate the differences between text on the printed page and the enacted script on the stage—the difference between drama and theatre.

Since students typically will not have read a wide range of plays, fourteen examples cited in *The Essential Theatre*, Seventh Edition, are also included in a companion anthology titled *Plays for the Theatre*, Seventh Edition, edited by Oscar G. Brockett with Robert Ball and published by Harcourt Brace College Publishers. These scripts serve as foundations for discussions of various types of theatrical experience and include Sophocles' *Oedipus the King*, the anonymously-composed *Noah and His Sons*, Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, Goldoni's *The Servant of Two Masters*, Molière's *Tartuffe*, Ibsen's *A Doll's House*, O'Neill's "The Hairy Ape," Brecht's *The Good Woman of Setzuan*, Williams's *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof*, Beckett's *Happy Days*, Wolfe's *The Colored Museum*, Gotanda's *Yankee Dawg You Die*, Sanchez-Scott's *Roosters*, and Wasserstein's *An American Daughter*. Those who prefer to read different but parallel selections may wish to consider *World Drama*, edited by Oscar G. Brockett and Mark Pape and also published by Harcourt Brace College Publishers, which includes seventeen additional plays: Sophocles' *Antigone*, Euripides' *Iphigeneia at Aulis*, Aristophanes' *Lysistrata*, Plautus' *Pseudolus*, the anonymous *Everyman*, Kan'ami's

Matsukaze, Shakespeare's *King Lear*, Molière's *The School for Wives*, Farquhar's *The Recruiting Officer*, Aiken's *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, Ibsen's *A Doll's House*, Shaw's *Major Barbara*, Hellman's *The Little Foxes*, Brecht's *Life of Galileo*, Beckett's *Krapp's Last Tape*, Soyinka's *The Strong Breed*, Baraka's *Slave Ship*, and Shepard's *Buried Child*.

As with the previous editions, *The Essential Theatre* is intended to assist in two different kinds of courses: an introductory course in which an overview serves as a foundation for those intending to major in theatre (future theatre *makers*) and a theatre appreciation course in which an overview provides insights and understanding for audience members (future theatre *goers*). Although these two courses may address the same topics, they usually do so with somewhat different emphases. Because instructors will often use the material in ways suited to their individual needs, we have sought to provide a logically organized, comprehensive overview of the theatre. But instructors need not follow the sequence we have chosen nor use all of the material in the book. Some instructors may wish to use only some chapters in Part Two, for instance, while others may wish to assign Part Three prior to or concurrently with Part Two. Regardless, our aim has been to provide helpful discussions of topics pertinent to introductory courses rather than to prescribe how the courses should be organized.

Acknowledgments

It is impossible to list all of those persons to whom we are indebted. The bibliography indicates most of the sources we have used, and captions indicate those persons and organizations who have permitted us to include their illustrations. So, in addition to this list, we want to thank the following colleagues for their insightful and useful comments: Sam Abel, University of Vermont; Susan Kattwinkel, College of Charleston; Lawrence Leach, Monroe County Community College; Rebecca E. Rumbo, University of Connecticut; and Steve Woods, Louisiana State University.

Finally, we thank our developmental editor at Harcourt Brace College Publishers, Cathlynn Richard, for her guidance and encouragement, as well as Terry Johnson, acquisitions editor; Laura Brennan, market strategist; Serena Barnett, production manager; Chris Morrow, art director; and Travis Tyre, project editor.

Oscar G. Brockett
Robert J. Ball

Contents

Preface v

PART ONE FOUNDATIONS 2

Chapter 1 The Nature of Theatre 4

- The Basic Elements of Theatre 5
- Theatre as a Form of Art 10
- Special Qualities of Theatre 17
- Art and Value 20

Chapter 2 Performance, Audience, and Critic 23

- Watching a Performance 24
- Who Is the Audience? 27
- The Audience and Critical Perspective 30
- The Basic Problems of Criticism 33
- Qualities Needed by the Critic 36

Chapter 3 The Playscript 37

- On Reading a Play 38
- Dramatic Action 39
- Methods of Organizing Dramatic Action 40
- Plot 42
 - The Beginning 42
 - The Middle 44
 - The End 44
- Character and Characterization 45
- Thought 46
- Diction 47
- Music 47
- Spectacle 49
- Form in Drama 51
 - Tragedy 51
 - Comedy 51
 - Other Forms 52
- Style in Drama 53
- Prologue 56

PART TWO VARIETIES OF THEATRICAL EXPERIENCE 58

Chapter 4 Festival Theatre: Greek, Roman, and Medieval Theatre Experiences 60

- The Theatre of Ancient Greece 61
- The Theatre of Dionysus 63
- The Performers 67
- Oedipus the King* and Its Performance 71
- Greek Comedy 77
- The Roman Theatre Experience 79
- The Roman Theatrical Context 81
- The Menaechmi* 84
- Other Roman Drama and Theatre 86
- The Revival of Drama in the Middle Ages 89
- Trade Guilds and the Corpus Christi Festival 91
- Conventions of Medieval Theatre 93
- The Wakefield Cycle 96
- Noah and His Sons* 98
- Other Medieval Theatre and Drama 101
- Comparing Greek, Roman, and Medieval 104

Chapter 5 Creating a Professional Theatre: Elizabethan England, Italian Commedia dell'Arte, and Seventeenth-Century France 105

- Creating a Professional Theatre 106
- Shakespeare and the Globe Theatre 108
- Hamlet* 114
- The Theatre Experience in Renaissance Italy 119
- Commedia dell'Arte 125
- The Servant of Two Masters* 132
- The French Background 136
- Molière and Seventeenth-Century French Theatre Practice 139
- Tartuffe* 141
- The Elizabethan, Italian, and French Traditions 145

Chapter 6 From Melodrama to Realism 147

- The Emergence of Melodrama 148
- Monte Cristo* 156
- The Advent of Realism 162
- Realism and Naturalism 163
- A Doll's House* 166
- Zola and Naturalism 169
- The Emergence of the Director 170
- The Independent Theatre Movement 174

Chapter 7 The Modernist Temperament: 1885–1940 178

- Symbolism 179
- Appia, Craig, and Reinhardt 181
- New Artistic Movements 184
- "The Hairy Ape"* 189
- The Postwar Era 193
- The Federal Theatre and the Group Theatre 195
- Epic Theatre 197
- The Good Woman of Setzuan* 199
- Artaud and the Theatre of Cruelty 202

Chapter 8 Reevaluation, Decentralization, and Subsidization 206

- Postwar American Theatre 207
- Cat on a Hot Tin Roof* 208
- The Musical in Postwar America 212
- Postwar Europe 215
- Absurdism 218
- Happy Days* 218
- Decentralization and Subsidization 220
- The Postwar British Theatre 222
- Off-Broadway and Off-Off-Broadway 226
- Regional Theatres 230
- Subsidization of the Arts in the United States 232
- Broadway and Musicals after Subsidization 234
- American Playwrights after 1960 237

Chapter 9 Contemporary Diversity 240

- Alternative Theatre Groups 241
- Poor and Environmental Theatres 243
- Multimedia, Happenings, and Performance Art 246
- Postmodernism 251
- Trends in Directing 253
- Cultural Diversity 255
- African American Theatre 256
- The Colored Museum* 259
- Latino Theatre 261
- Roosters* 264
- Asian American Theatre 266
- Yankee Dawg You Die* 267
- Native American Theatre 271
- Women's Theatre 273
- An American Daughter* 274
- Gay and Lesbian Theatre 276
- Epilogue 278

PART THREE THEATRICAL PRODUCTION 280

Chapter 10 Theatrical Space and Production Design 282

- The Influence of Theatrical Space 283
- The Proscenium-Arch Theatre 285
- The Thrust Stage 285
- The Arena Stage 286
- Flexible Space 288
- Auxiliary Spaces 290
- Using the Theatrical Space 291
- Production Design 292
- The Elements of Visual Design 294
- The Principles of Design 296
- Sound in Design 300
- The Integrated Production Design 302

Chapter 11 Playwriting and Dramaturgy 303

- The Playwright 304
- The Dramaturg 311
- Dramaturgy and Literary Management 311
- Production Dramaturgy 315

Chapter 12 Directing and Producing 318

- The Producer 319
- The Director 322
 - Analyzing and Studying the Script 323
 - Approaches to Directing 324
 - The Director and the Designers 328
 - Auditions and Casting 330
 - Working with the Actors 334
- The Director's Means 334
 - Stage Images 335
 - Movement, Gesture, and Business 336
 - Voice and Speech 338
- Rehearsing the Play 340
 - The Director's Assistants 345
- Thinking about the Director's Work 345

Chapter 13 Acting 347

- The Actor's Training and Means 349
 - The Actor's Instrument 349
 - Observation and Imagination 352
 - Concentration 352
 - Stage Vocabulary 353
 - Scene Study 355
 - From Training to Performing 355

Creating a Role	357
Psychological and Emotional Preparation	358
Movement, Gesture, and Business	358
Vocal Characterization	361
Memorization and Line Readings	362
Refining the Role	363
Dress Rehearsals and Performance	363
Thinking about the Actor's Work	366

Chapter 14 Scenic Design 368

The Functions of Scenic Design	369
The Scene Designer's Skills	371
Working Plans and Procedures	373
Basic Scenic Elements	378
Soft-Scenery Units	378
Framed Units	379
Three-Dimensional Units	380
Innovative Materials and Methods	380
Assembling Scenery	382
Painting Scenery	383
Shifting Scenery Onstage	385
Set Decoration and Properties	388
Technical Rehearsals, Dress Rehearsals, and Performances	389
The Scene Designer's Assistants and Coworkers	390
Thinking about the Scene Designer's Work	390

Chapter 15 Costume Design and Makeup 392

The Functions of Costume Design	393
The Costume Designer's Skills	396
Working Plans and Procedures	398
Realizing the Designs	401
The Costume Designer and the Actor	405
Makeup	407
The Function of Makeup	407
The Makeup Plot	407
Types of Makeup	407
Makeup Materials	409
The Costume Parade, Dress Rehearsals, and Performances	412
The Costume Designer's Assistants	412
Thinking about Costume and Makeup	413

Chapter 16 Lighting Design, Sound, and Multimedia 415

The Controllable Qualities of Light	416
The Functions of Stage Lighting	417
The Lighting Designer's Skills	419
The Lighting Designer's Working Procedures	421

Organizing the Distribution of Light	423
Lighting Instruments, Accessories, and Controlboards	426
Lighting Instruments	427
Accessories	430
Connecting Panels and Controlboards	431
Setting the Lights, Rehearsals, and Performances	432
The Lighting Designer's Employment and Assistants	434
Sound	435
Mixed-Media Productions	438
Thinking about Stage Lighting and Sound	439
Afterword	442

Appendix Opportunities to Work in the Theatre 443

Theatre as an Avocation	444
Theatre in Education	444
Theatre for Children and Youth	444
Secondary School Theatre	446
Undergraduate Colleges and Universities	446
Graduate Schools	446
University Resident Theatres	446
The Community Theatre	447
Summer Theatres	447
Not-for-Profit Professional Companies	448
For-Profit Professional Theatres	449
Directors	449
Actors	449
Stage Managers	449
Designers	450
Scenery, Costume, Lighting, and Property Crews	450
Others	450
Special Employment Opportunities	451

Glossary 453

Bibliography 465

Index 481

THE ESSENTIAL THEATRE

SEVENTH EDITION


**HARCOURT
BRACE**

soon to become

 **Harcourt
College Publishers**

A Harcourt Higher Learning Company

Soon you will find Harcourt Brace's distinguished innovation, leadership, and support under a different name . . . a new brand that continues our unsurpassed quality, service, and commitment to education.

We are combining the strengths of our college imprints into one worldwide brand:  Harcourt. Our mission is to make learning accessible to anyone, anywhere, anytime—reinforcing our commitment to lifelong learning.

We'll soon be Harcourt College Publishers.
Ask for us by name.

One Company
**"Where Learning
Comes to Life."**



The Nature of Theatre



Thornton Wilder's *Our Town*, one of America's best known and most popular plays, as seen at the Williamstown Theatre Festival. Directed by Peter Hunt. The actors are James Whitmore, Calista Flockhart, and Sam Trammell. (photo by Richard Feldman)