

# Theatre

## Its Art & Craft

*4th Ed.*



STEPHEN M. ARCHER CYNTHIA GENDRICH WOODROW HOOD

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*4th Edition*

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# Preface

*Theatre: Its Art and Craft* is intended for use in theatre appreciation and introduction to theatre courses. In this heavily revised new edition we have paid particular attention to an inclusive examination of theatre studies and production. Whenever possible, we have sought to provide a multicultural perspective on theatrical performance. We have also tried to include new developments and trends in contemporary theatre practice, including new technologies.

For instructors, the fourth edition offers a variety of new pedagogical features. At the end of each chapter you will find exercises and questions geared for critical thinking about theatrical enterprises, as well as brief annotated bibliographies of related materials. The wealth of new photographs, statistical information, and contemporary cultural references will help your students connect to the rich, diverse, and vibrant world of live theatre.

The first chapter of the text introduces readers to the broad issues of artistic practice, while the second chapter inspects the specific area of live theatre. The remainder of the chapters examine in large detail the various functionaries of the theatre (audience, critics, playwrights, directors, actors, and designers). Significant new material can be found in the chapters on actors and designers. You will also find new classroom activities and exercises in the chapters on playwrights and actors. A fully new chapter (Chapter 8) surveys the breadth and scope of theatre history. It also examines the relationship between theatre scholarship and practice via the roles of the dramaturg and other theatre scholars.

For students, we welcome those who have little or no theatrical background or experience. We hope that you will find a bridge here from an American popular culture overwhelmed with television, Hollywood, Disney, home video, and personal computers to the world of live theatrical practice.

As in previous volumes, we would like to encourage readers to examine the complex interaction of all theatrical elements. Just as in music some instruments supply the basic structure and some embellish that structure, so in the theatre the elements of script, directing, acting, and design interact in shifting configurations to offer a new work of art at every performance. Examining these relationships will enrich the theatrical experience for you.

You will probably attend theatrical performances while enrolled in this course. Take what you can from these experiences and test what you find in

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the theatre against what you learn in class. Ask questions; discuss what you see with your professor and your classmates, and stay open to new points of view. Playwright Paula Vogel recently suggested that we should “pursue not only joy and pleasure but become curious at states of discomfiture and unease.” The acquired taste, she suggests, “is as valuable a tool in the making of selves as the native gift.”

We would like to thank our colleagues and friends who have supported us throughout the process of completing this book. A great debt of thanks is owed to the University of Missouri–Columbia, Illinois Wesleyan University, Wake Forest University, and the University of Texas–Pan American. For the use of photographs and support, we would also like to thank the University of Wisconsin–LaCrosse, the Georgia Shakespeare Festival, the Theatre of Comedy Company, and all the other generous people who have contributed photos and illustrations.

Finally we would like to offer our thanks to the dedicated people at Collegiate Press, without whose help this text would not have been possible. In particular, we offer our gratitude to Steve Barta, editor Jackie Estrada, designer Chris Davis, and photo researcher Susan Holtz. Their expertise has made this a better book. The faults in the volume remain our own.

Cynthia Gendrich  
Woodrow Hood

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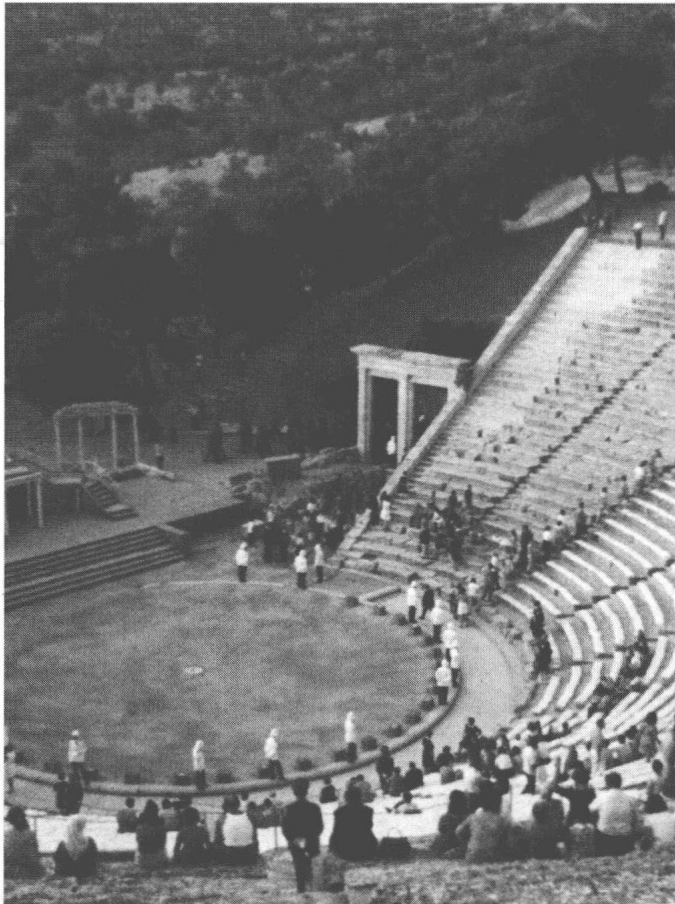
# Theatre

## Its Art & Craft

*4th Edition*

# 1 The Nature of Art

The Theatre of Epidauros in Greece



Evolution of the Arts

America's Involvement in the Arts

Toward a Definition of Art

The Bases of Criticism in the Arts

The Functions of Art

*Entertainment*

*Edification*

*Exaltation*

*Without art, the crudeness of reality would make the  
world unbearable.*

GEORGE BERNARD SHAW (1856–1950)

Once upon a time a group of men gathered on a hillside to sing praises to their god. Following their ancient customs, they began improvising hymns of praise, when suddenly one of them stepped out of the group and announced that he had actually *become* the god.

The place was Athens, Greece; the time some six centuries before Christ. The god was Dionysus, the Greek god of fertility and wine. The man who made the startling announcement was Thespis from Icaria, who thus became, according to tradition, the world's first actor.

The Thespian legend has survived over twenty-five centuries. We have little idea what really happened, although we do know that some Athenians—including the philosopher Plato—hated the idea of impersonation, considering it merely a refined form of lying. But the idea of theatre prospered, and the Greek drama flourished and reached heights rarely equaled and never surpassed. Then the Greeks and their civilization faded from the scene, replaced by the Romans, who were superb lawmakers, road-builders, and administrators of empire but rarely artists of significance. After a thousand years the Romans lost their influence, as barbarians ransacked Rome, and western Europe entered the so-called Dark Ages around A.D. 500. Meanwhile, theatre flourished in India and China.

THE NATURE OF  
ART



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Around 1500, a similar golden age, known as the Renaissance, began in the West as Europe began to congeal into separate nations. England, France, Italy, Spain, and—later—Germany spread their colonies around the world. Each of them developed a distinct style of theatre; in the English-speaking tradition, which we share with Britain, Shakespeare and the Elizabethan theatre rose to brilliance about 1600.

When English colonies in North America became established enough to pursue entertainment, in the midst of the eighteenth century, actors appeared, using makeshift theatres at first. Not everyone in the New World welcomed the players: the Puritans outlawed theatre as frivolity, mere frippery, the devil's workshop, a veritable school for scandal. But they couldn't stop it, and the theatre spread from the Atlantic Coast west to Pittsburgh and Ohio, down the Mississippi to New Orleans, across the great American desert to Salt Lake City, thence to the gold fields of California near San Francisco and Sacramento, and then up and down the West Coast.

Early in the twentieth century, some people with a new technology found the quality of light in southern California especially effective for photography and began a film community in Hollywood. Almost immediately the doomsayers predicted the demise of live theatre, which they believed could never compete with performances recorded on film. Later, other innovators figured out how to send both pictures and sound into the audience's own homes, and again the crystal-gazers predicted the end of the theatre. At the turn of the millennium scientists are pursuing virtual reality—computer programs and hardware that will give a person all the sensations of experiencing stimuli that experts have programmed into microchips. Computer games grow increasingly sophisticated, and live theatre seems to once again face possible extinction. But it hasn't disappeared yet, and, as always, theatre artists have learned with the rest of the culture how to use new technological advances.

Some modern critics have called the theatre a handmade artifact in an age of mass production, and such a point of view finds much to support it. But millions of Americans still busily go about producing live theatre even as electronic entertainment of all sorts bombards the modern household.



Not only does the theatre still flourish; so, it would seem, do the other fine arts. None of them shows any signs of disappearing. But in an age of mass-produced entertainment, when dozens of channels bring all manner of entertainment, from documentaries to reruns of sitcoms, into our houses, the traditional fine arts can prove intimidating to some people, especially to newcomers. The avant-garde forms of any art usually leave audiences stunned and bewildered, even hostile. Any art in any stage of development speaks more articulately to its audience if that audience has had some preparation.

✱ One does not need to have painted to appreciate a painting, no more than one needs to have acted to enjoy fine acting. But most of us benefit from some guidance when faced with the unknown, and modern students approaching the fine arts should not expect to be an exception. Faced with the mind-boggling variety of the fine arts, the newcomer might simply give up the search for understanding and turn to other, less troublesome and more immediate pursuits, such as earning a living or earning a degree.

But even a quick study of the arts reveals them as central to life—indeed, as something that attempts to illuminate life and helps make it worth living. Art has been a part of the human experience from its earliest beginnings and continues today, not because of the decrees of authorities and teachers, but because people find in the arts something of value that they can find nowhere else.



## Evolution of the Arts

The fine arts in their various forms have flourished in almost every society since people began to keep records. Consider:

1. *Music*. The purest of the arts, music is a tonal language totally created out of the void of silence, perhaps first suggested by our own rhythmic heartbeats. As a race we first made drums; some musical devices date back 30,000 years. More sophisticated instruments began to appear in Egypt as early as 2000 B.C. Music may well also be the most powerful of the arts, stirring our emotions to degrees unusual for the other art forms. Beethoven, Willie Nelson, and Koko Taylor all speak clearly to their respective audiences, and those audiences frequently overlap.