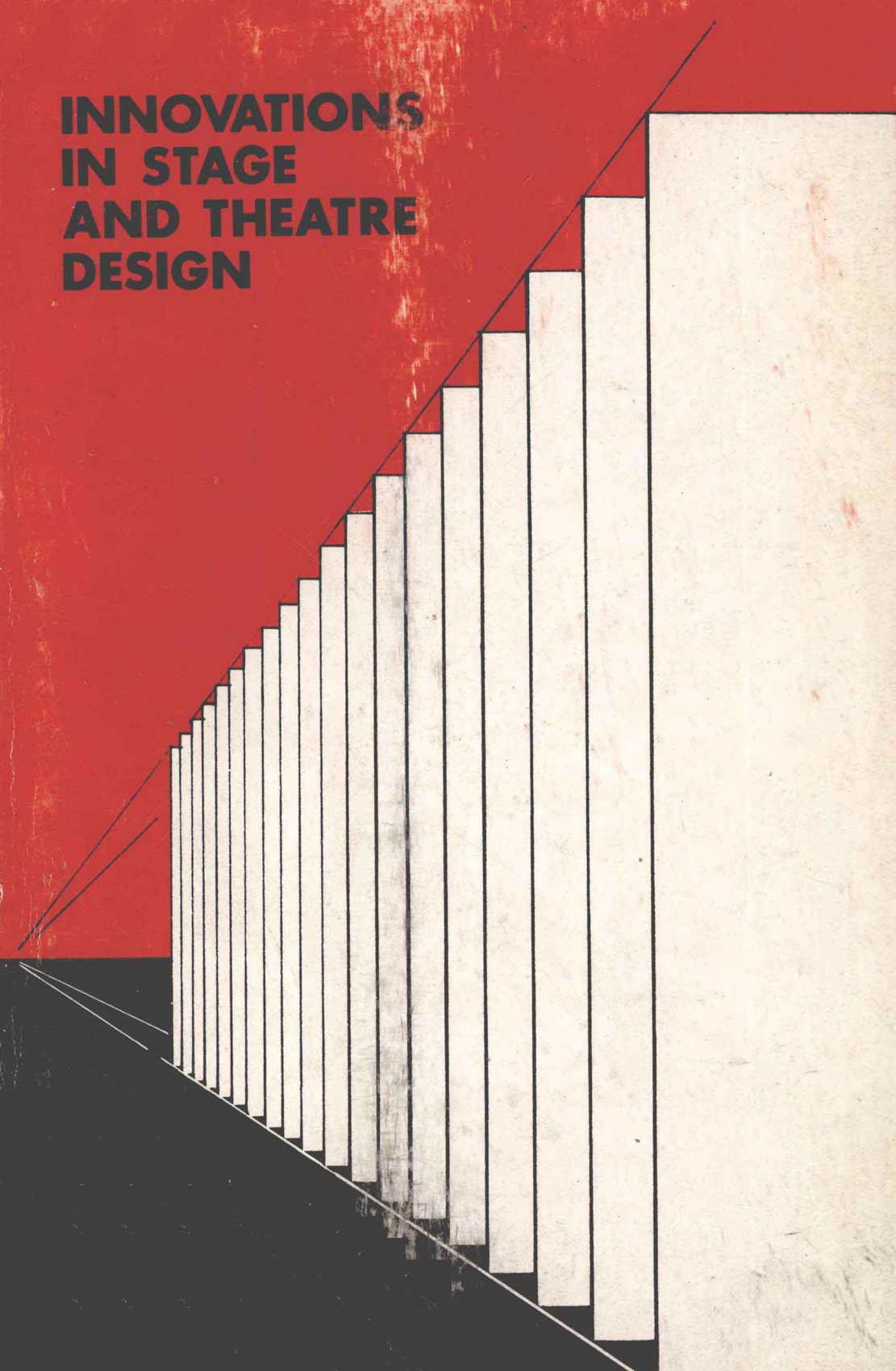


INNOVATIONS IN STAGE AND THEATRE DESIGN



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PAPERS OF THE SIXTH CONGRESS
INTERNATIONAL FEDERATION FOR THEATRE RESEARCH
LINCOLN CENTER, NEW YORK, N.Y.
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PREFACE

The papers included in this book comprise a partial history of innovations in European and American stagecraft in the twentieth century. While it is by no means a complete review, through its inherent process of pinpointing innovators and their innovations in Europe and America many seminal sources of modern stagecraft are revealed in detail. These papers thus provide a reassessment of what was happening in stage lighting, in multi-media projections, in the revolving stage, in scenic design, in theatre architecture, and in the staging of historical drama, all of which have made our present-day theatre what it is. In America we have frequently placed laurel wreaths on the heads of Gordon Craig, Adolphe Appia, and Max Reinhardt, but we have known little about the inventive work of other equally important innovators. The look backwards in this collection of papers shows in very specific ways the historical contributions of some of the modern theatre's best, while at the same time it looks at the contemporary innovations of the late Tyrone Guthrie and of George Izenour.

The publication of these papers has been made possible through a generous grant by the National Endowment for the Arts. Because of the transfer in editorship following the death of Professor Alan Downer of Princeton University, the intended editor, materials used in this volume had to be assembled from several sources by the present editor before the final editing could begin. The editor wishes to thank for their help in putting this volume together Robert M. MacGregor of Theatre Arts Books; Mrs. John F. Wharton, Secretary of the Organizing Committee for the IFTR Congress; Professor Thomas F. Marshall III, Chairman of the American Society for Theatre Research; Professor Alois M. Nagler and Professor Harry W. Pedicord, co-chairmen of the Congress Committee; and Professor William Green, Secretary-Treasurer of the American Society for Theatre Research.

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REVIEW OF ACTIVITIES
OF THE
SIXTH CONGRESS

LOUIS A.
RACHOW

Truth is the aim of all research, no matter how sharply this truth may conflict with our social, ethical, and political conditions. This is the unifying bond of the modern university.

THE PASSAGE OF TIME HAS NOT DIMINISHED THE LUSTER OF Austrian surgeon-musician Theodor Billroth's thoughts on truth, research, and unity as is evident from the unrefuted success of the Sixth Congress of the International Federation for Theatre Research. That the assembly was a scholarly and social triumph has been attested by reports and articles published here and abroad and by testimonies received from persons attending.

Under the sponsorship of the American Society for Theatre Research and the Theatre Library Association, this was the Federation's first Congress to be held in the Western Hemisphere. Approximately two hundred scholars from twenty-five nations participated. The theme was *Innovations in Stage and Theatre Design*, and all meetings and symposia were held at the Library & Museum of the Performing Arts at Lincoln Center. Countries represented and their respective number of constituents were as follows: Austria 2, Canada 6, Czechoslovakia 2, Denmark 1, Finland 1, France 1, German Democratic Republic 2, German Federal Republic 4, Hungary 1, India 1, Italy 2, Japan 1, Korea 2, Mexico 1, Netherlands 2, Norway 2, Rumania 1, Spain 1, Sweden 4, Switzerland 1, Turkey 1, United Kingdom 10, United States 145, Venezuela 1, and Yugoslavia 1.

Delegates who arrived over the weekend prior to registration were guests of the New York Public Theatre and the New York Shakespeare Festival in their new quarters on Lafayette Street at a Sunday matinee of Charles Gordone's Pulitzer Prize winning play, *No Place to be Somebody*. Immediately following, a cocktail reception was held with founder-producer Joseph Papp, the playwright, and the cast acting as hosts. Mr. Papp briefed his guests on the exciting ventures in progress for the Public Theatre, formerly the 113-year-old Astor Library. The play itself was performed in the Anspacher Theatre — a room with graceful columns, grand arching skylight, a thrust stage, and seats for 299 people.

The opening activities on Monday began with registration and a Joint Session of the Executive and Plenary Committees. Welcoming addresses were given by Harry W. Pedicord and Louis A. Rachow on behalf of the American Society for Theatre Research and the Theatre Library Association. Readings of the first symposium papers followed: *Robert Edmond Jones: Artist of the Theatre*, by Donald Oenslager of Yale University; *Norman Bel Geddes: Renaissance Man of the American Theatre*, by Frederick J. Hunter of the University of Texas; and *Design of the Multi-Purpose Theatre-Concert Hall*, by George C. Izenour of Yale University.

A cocktail reception in the Vincent Astor Gallery in the Library & Museum of the Performing Arts hosted by the United Scenic Artists Local ended the day's program. On view in the gallery was the handsome exhibition arranged especially for the Congress, *Three American Innovators: Jones, Bel Geddes, Izenour*. An added treat to the eye was a display of *Sets by Ming Cho Lee* in the Amsterdam Gallery.

The second day's agenda opened with a Joint Session of the Executive and Plenary Committees followed by readings of *Sir Tyrone Guthrie and the Rediscovery of the Shakespearean Playhouse*, by Hugh Hunt of England; *Karl Lautenschläger: Reformer of Stage Scenery*, by Dr. Günter Schöne of the German Federal Republic; and *The Morax Brothers and the Théâtre du Jorat*, by Dr. Edmund Stadler of Switzerland.

No papers were scheduled for Wednesday in order that the Venice Committee of the International Federation for Theatre Research, the Editorial Committee of *Theatre Research/Recherches Théâtrales*, and the American Society for Theatre Research might hold their annual business meetings. This was also the day of Open House at the new United States International Theatre Institute headquarters as planned and executed by Miss Rosamond Gilder, President. Climaxing the day's official program was a viewing of two outstanding theatre exhibitions at The Pierpont Morgan Library — *Dramatis Personae: First Editions, Manuscripts, Letters, Prints, and Drawings Relating to the Theatre* and *Costume Prints of the Court of Louis XIV*, after which the viewers were guests of the Trustees and Fellows in the magnificent Library-Drawing Room.

The third Joint Session of the Executive and Plenary Committees was held Thursday, followed by readings of *Twentieth-Century Innovations in Stage Design, Stage Machinery, and Theatre Architecture in Austria*, by Professor Dr. Margret Dietrich of Austria, and *Lighting That Creates the Scene and Lighting as an Actor*, by Professor Dr. Frantisek Černý of Czechoslovakia. Professor Dr. Ferenc Hont's *Traditions and Innovations in the Hungarian Theatre* was scheduled for presentation but not read

because of the author's inability to attend the conference. It is included, however, in this volume of proceedings. A dress rehearsal of the Lincoln Center for the Performing Arts Repertory Road Company's production of Heinar Kipphardt's *In the Matter of J. Robert Oppenheimer* in the Vivian Beaumont Theatre topped off the day's events.

Friday was a day of sight-seeing, including visits to various museums and libraries and backstage tours of the Vivian Beaumont Theatre and the newly completed Juilliard School of Music at Lincoln Center. The tour ended with a cocktail reception at The Players, hosted by The Walter Hampden Memorial Library. President Dennis King welcomed the group in his inimitable style proclaiming how apropos that The Players entertain the Congress since the club's founder, Edwin Booth, was an acclaimed international actor in his own right. On view was an exhibition of newly acquired Boothiana, *New Treasures of the 19th-Century Stage*.

The fourth symposium papers were presented on the closing day: *Some Aspects of Italian Design Since the War*, by Dr. Raul Radice of Italy, and *On the Problem of Audio-Visual Unity of Text and Action in the Theatre*, by Professor Filip Kumbatovic of Yugoslavia. The final meetings of the International Federation for Theatre Research Committees were held in the afternoon, followed by the IFTR General Assembly at which tributes were paid to the late Ifan Kyrle Fletcher. Mrs. Fletcher was elected to Honorary Membership. The Sixth Congress came to an official close with a banquet held at the Institute of International Education. Two hundred twenty-eight individuals attended.

Invitations to two outstanding and impressive exhibitions were issued to members and delegates who extended their visit beyond the Congress week. The first was a trip to the Harvard Theatre Collection in the Houghton Library at Harvard University on Tuesday, October 14th, co-hosted by Mmes. Helen D. Willard, Curator, and Jeanne T. Newlin, Assistant Curator. The feature attraction in Houghton Library was the memorable exhibit, *The Player and the Playhouse in the Harvard Theatre Collection*, which was beautifully supplemented by the imaginative *Harvard Men and Women of the Theatre*, across the green in the Widener Library. After a New England luncheon at the Harvard Faculty Club, invitations were extended to tour Harvard's famed Loeb Drama Center. At the cocktail hour the Houghton Library Exhibition Hall was transformed into an informal reception room where some two hundred persons from the Boston area came to greet the delegates and officers. For those who had the time, an early rehearsal of the Harvard Dramatic Club's production of Tennessee Williams' *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof* rounded out the day's events. In addition to twenty-eight foreign delegates, thirty-two American

members of the Congress made the trip to Cambridge. Several stayed over to examine and work in the Harvard Theatre Collection.

Thursday, October 16th, found the remaining Congress delegates in Washington, D.C. as guests of the Folger Shakespeare Library where the main exhibition was a display of highlights of *Four Centuries of British Theatre*. Certain of the delegates were entertained during the day at the Library of Congress where they were also encouraged to make use of the research facilities, as were they at the Folger. The day ended with a reception originally scheduled at the home of Folger Director, Professor O. B. Hardison, Jr., but for want of space was transferred to the Folger Great Hall because of the number attending. Cultural Attaches of the Embassies of the eighteen countries whose delegates made the trip to Washington were special guests at the gala affair. Also present were emissaries of the American Educational Theatre Association, The American National Theatre and Academy, the Library of Congress, the Smithsonian Institution, and the United States Office of Education. Delegates and members seemed to be in agreement that being surrounded by famous portraits of Shakespeare and notable Shakespearean actors was a most fitting finale to the studies and festivities of the Congress week.

In conclusion a note of acknowledgment. For three years, prior to the Congress, a Planning Committee made up of members from the American Society for Theatre Research and the Theatre Library Association met faithfully and diligently to plan and prepare for the week's activities. Without the expert guidance of Co-Chairmen Alois M. Nagler and Harry W. Pedicord, Secretary Mrs. John F. Wharton, and Treasurer Robert M. MacGregor, the singular success of the Congress would not have been realized. In supporting roles were Robert H. Ball, Selma Jeanne Cohen, Mrs. Robin Craven, Alan S. Downer, William Green, Bernard A. Grossman, Norman F. Philbrick, Louis A. Rachow, and Thor E. Wood.

An Auxiliary Committee composed of the following distaff side, under the Chairmanship of Mrs. Craven, paved the way for a smooth and varied social program for delegates and guests during "off duty" hours: Mrs. Andrew Anspach, Mrs. Alan S. Downer, Dr. Helen Gaubert, Mrs. John D. Gordon, Mrs. Sarah Chokla Gross, Mrs. Norman Hapgood, Miss Mary Ann Jensen, Mrs. Thomas F. Marshall III, Mrs. Alois M. Nagler, Mrs. Donald Oenslager, Mrs. Julian Pace, Mrs. Harry W. Pedicord, and Mrs. Norman F. Philbrick. Mrs. John V. Lindsay served as Honorary Chairman.

A credit line is also due the Institute of International Education for its professional administration of the Congress under the superb direction of Robert F. Morris and Mrs. Natasha Deakin.

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ROBERT EDMOND JONES:
ARTIST
OF THE THEATRE

DONALD
OENSLAGER
UNITED STATES

BETWEEN 1915 AND 1940 THERE WAS A RESONANT EXPLOSION of activity in our theatre in the work of the younger generation of playwrights, directors, designers and actors. Idealistic groups asserted themselves with infectious enthusiasm. New alignments with the professional theatre were established. The growth of this new movement marked a stimulating and exciting time in the American Theatre.

The designers most responsible for the new visual directions of this theatre were the triumvirate, Lee Simonson, Norman Bel Geddes, and Robert Edmond Jones. Together they established Stage Design as an Art in the Theatre and gave the visual theatre impetus and recognition throughout our country. They were chiefly responsible for gathering the stage designers into a union organization. While these three designers were close friends, each had his own creative goals and concept of design not only of scenery for the conventional theatre but also of tomorrow's theatre architecture which might house their new style of design.

Robert Edmond Jones (1887-1954) burst into public consciousness on the night of January 27, 1915 with his setting and costumes for *The Man Who Married A Dumb Wife* by Anatole France. Within ten years, when Jones' *Drawings for the Theatre* was first published, the old artless style was passé and the revolution effected by Jones, Simonson, and Bel Geddes was triumphant.

I first came to New York the year before that, in 1924, and I was privileged to work with Bobby Jones, as everyone affectionately called him in those days, for one season as an assistant—better to say as an apprentice. Afterward, all through the years, he and I remained close friends.

It is significant that Mr. Jones was of New England stock, born in the small town of Milton in New Hampshire and in a house which had been occupied by his family for generations. This long, rambling structure included a roadside tavern built in 1810 and his bedroom was the former "ladies' retiring room" on the second floor of the tavern. The oldest part of the house inspired his design for the Cabot Homestead for *Desire Under the Elms* by Eugene O'Neill.

The Jones' farm was a working farm. His father read Dickens propped up on one plow handle as he followed his horses down the long

furrows of the rich valley. Mrs. Jones was a musician who had attended the Boston Conservatory of Music. She taught young Robert to play the violin and encouraged his growing interest in drawing. When he was 19, young Jones broke from New Hampshire tradition and went to Harvard College in Massachusetts, graduating in 1910.

At Harvard he concerned himself with the Fine Arts, developed his drawing and painting under the distinguished artist and teacher, Denman Ross. He occupied himself with little or no activity in the theatre. However, on occasion he did indulge himself by going into Boston to B. F. Keith's Theatre where he was enamored with the magical, dazzling and theatrical allure of such divas and sirens as Valesca Seurat and gorgeous Gertrude Hoffman.

After two years as an instructor at Harvard, he found his way from New England to Europe where he discovered the force of the New Movement in the theatre and surrendered himself to its irresistible appeal. He was in Florence the year Gordon Craig founded his Theatre School in his Arena Goldoni but, strange to say, even though armed with a letter of introduction to Craig and while he admired Craig's spatial innovations enormously, he was not enrolled in the school. He found wonderment in Claudel's *L'Annonce faite à Marie*, presented in the revolutionary theatre of Appia and Dalcroze in the latter's school at Hellerau outside Dresden. Jacques Copeau had just installed his aspiring company in his new Théâtre du Vieux Colombier in Paris. He moved to Berlin and became enthusiastically involved with Max Reinhardt and his two principal designers, Emil Orlik and Ernst Stern, in the Deutsches Theater. He was working on a production of *The Merchant of Venice* and also an unproduced play for Budapest when the First World War broke out and Jones came back to New York.

After his "wanderjahr" in Europe, Jones returned to attack our theatre's stronghold of false realism. As an artist, fortified with his vision of "the new stagecraft," he soon opened new doors and illuminated new paths. As a craftsman, he discovered new ways and means of employing canvas and scene paint and light. His unorthodox designs were unembroidered with realism. They suggested mood by understatement and expressed the essence of his concept of a scene.

Lee Simonson perceptively relates his art to his New England background.

Robert Edmond Jones, as an artist and as a person, was a unique combination of craftsman, romantic, mystic and Puritan. His feeling for the materials he worked with and his skill in manipulating them were akin

to those of our colonial craftsmen who gave a clear and enduring beauty to their silverware, chairs and chests, porticos and staircases, their steeples and weather vanes, frigates and figureheads. His profession was less a calling than a call, like the "call" that led some of his New England forebears to the pulpit. The soul to be saved was the theatre's. His aim, throughout his career, was not only to recover its pristine purity and splendor by his own efforts but also to inspire all workers in the theatre—authors, actors, directors, as well as fellow designers—to enlist in his crusade. . . . Jones' work was not simply a profession, in the accepted sense, but a continual dedication. For he possessed both the vision of an artist and the imagination of a militant visionary.

Two of his Harvard classmates and admirers deeply interested in the new visual theatre arranged an exhibition of stage designs in a vacant Fifth Avenue store. In this exhibition Jones' drawings for the theatre attracted the attention of another young theatre enthusiast—an impresario and stage director, Arthur Hopkins, who at once engaged Jones to design his production of Anatole France's *The Man Who Married A Dumb Wife* with the English director, Harley Granville-Barker. This production was a tremendous success and marked the beginning of a collaboration between Jones and Hopkins for many years to come.

The simplicity and style of Jones' design for this play (Plate 1) with its medieval background was indeed a turning point in America for the visual theatre. It was a complete break with the realistic traditions of the contemporary theatre epitomized in the photographic realism of the productions of David Belasco. Jones established once and for all the importance of the artist in the theatre.

It has been said that a man who works with his hands is a workman; a man who works with his hands and his head is a craftsman; and when that man also works with his heart, he is an artist. From his first production, Robert Edmond Jones combined these three roles with triple felicity.

To understand Robert Edmond Jones' scope as an artist turn to his 1920 designs for the Jones-Hopkins production of *Richard III*, with John Barrymore playing Richard. Jones also considered himself the servant of the play. He envisioned the entire play set within a massive, stone courtyard inspired by the Tower of London, the set to occupy the entire stage and rise to its full height. These weighty walls were always present as a brooding background. For changes of scene an arras, a cage for a prison or a wall were rolled out to the center of the stage. For the final scene the black silhouette of a gibbet against a blood red sky dramatized visually the closing action of the drama. With this production Jones achieved simplification, a multi-scene basic setting that "worked" for the whole



Plate 1: The Man Who Married a Dumb Wife. Courtesy of Theatre Arts Books.



Plate 2: Til Eulenspiegel. Courtesy of Theatre Arts Books.