

Theater
THE LIVELY ART

Edwin Wilson
Alvin Goldfarb

THIRD EDITION



Theater

THE LIVELY ART

THIRD EDITION

Edwin Wilson

The City University of New York

Alvin Goldfarb

Illinois State University



McGraw-Hill
College

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

McGraw-Hill

A Division of The McGraw-Hill Companies

THEATER: THE LIVELY ART

Copyright © 1999, 1996, 1991 by Edwin Wilson and Alvin Goldfarb. 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 data base or retrieval system, without the prior written permission of the publisher.

This book is printed on acid-free paper.

4 5 6 7 8 9 0 VNH/VNH 1 0 9

ISBN 0-07-290736-3 (text)

Editorial director: *Phillip A. Butcher*

Executive editor: *Cynthia Ward*

Development editor: *Allison McNamara*

Marketing manager: *David Patterson*

Project manager: *Alisa Watson*

Senior production supervisor: *Melanie Salvati*

Senior photo research coordinator: *Keri Johnson*

Photo researcher: *Inge King*

Senior designer: *Crispin Prebys*

Designer: *Carolyn Deacy*

Compositor: *PC&F, Inc.*

Typeface: *10/12 Sabon*

Printer: *Von Hoffmann Press Inc.*

Cover: *Livent's 1998 Tony Award-winning musical RAGTIME.*

Photo by Michael Cooper.

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Wilson, Edwin.

Theater : The lively art / Edwin Wilson, Alvin Goldfarb. — 3rd ed.

p. cm.

Includes bibliographical references and index.

ISBN 0-07-290736-3 (alk. paper)

1. Theater. 2. Theater—History. I. Goldfarb, Alvin.

II. Title.

PN2037.W57 1998

792—dc21

98-4662

CIP

<http://www.mhhe.com>

Photo Credits:

Part I Opener: Gregory Boyd directing performers Elizabeth Heflin, Sherri Parker Lee, and Jennifer Arisco in *THE GREEKS* at the Alley Theatre, Houston. Photo by T. Charles Erickson.

Part II Opener: *WOMAN WARRIOR*, Huntington Theatre, Boston. Photo by Richard Feldman.

DEDICATION

To our wives, Catherine Wilson and Elaine Goldfarb.

This third edition of *Theater: The Lively Art* includes extensive revisions and substantive changes from previous editions. These improvements will be of great benefit, we believe, to both faculty members and students.

Perhaps the most noticeable change is the much more extensive use of color photographs. Instead of separate color sections appearing at three places in the book—as was the case in earlier editions—the third edition has color throughout. This not only makes the book much more attractive and interesting visually; it also helps to bring alive performances and all the visual elements of production in a way that was not possible before.

As for changes in the text, Chapter 1 now incorporates expanded material on the diverse forms of contemporary theater: African-American, Hispanic, Asian-American, feminist, gay and lesbian, political, and experimental. There is additional information on these various types of theater throughout the text.

Coverage of performing and directing, formerly found in Chapter 2, has been expanded so that each is now a chapter on its own. Chapter 2, on performing, has been extensively revised to reflect current approaches to acting and actor training. As before, Chapter 3—on directing—also includes a section on managing and producing: the business and behind-the-scenes aspect of creating a theater event.

An extended photographic essay replaces the former chapter on a hypothetical production as the final chapter in Part One. Entitled “Profile of a Production,” it traces a production at the Illinois Shakespeare Festival from its beginning to a finished performance. This chapter is designed to help students visualize the many steps required in mounting a production and serves as the culmination of Part One, on creating theater.

In Part Two, the vignettes of the second edition have been separated from the text as boxes. Thus the historical material flows smoothly, but along with it there are segments that re-create the feeling of attending a production at a specific time in theater history.

The final three chapters, on modern theater, have been extensively reorganized. Rather than emphasizing the contrast between realism and departures from realism, we now follow the chronological organization of the preceding chapters. At the same time, we have made additional improvements in the way

the material is presented. All of this should make the information on modern theater more accessible, understandable, and exciting.

Though there have been important changes, the features which were enthusiastically endorsed in previous editions have been retained. *Theater: The Lively Art* remains a comprehensive introductory theater text that incorporates a number of elements in one volume: an introduction to the audience's experience of theater, an investigation of the elements of theater, and a study of the important developments in the history of theater.

All students reading the book, we assume, are potential theatergoers, not just in their college years but throughout their lives. We have attempted, therefore, to make *Theater: The Lively Art* an ideal one-volume text to prepare students as future audience members. It will give them a grasp of how theater functions, of how it should be viewed and judged, of the tradition behind any performance they may attend.

The book will also prepare students who wish to continue studies in theater, as majors, as minors, or as students from other disciplines who take advanced courses. It provides the foundation for further studies in every aspect of theater: acting, directing, design, dramatic literature, history, theory, and criticism.

The book is divided into an Introduction and two parts. Part One, *Creating Theater*, introduces students to the people who make theater possible, to the elements of theater, and to significant concepts of theater. We explore first the role of the audience. Not only do audiences form a vital link in any theater event; students will find themselves in the role of audience members more frequently than in any other role. We investigate acting and directing, including various acting techniques and methods of training performers, as well as the major approaches to directing. We study design and technical production, including the nuts-and-bolts aspects of scenery, costumes, lighting, and sound. We look at the script: the point of view incorporated in tragedy, comedy, tragicomedy, melodrama and so forth; dramatic structure; and the creation of dramatic characters. We also consider the theoretical aspects of criticism.

In Part Two, *Our Theater Tradition and Theater Today*, we begin with Greek theater and continue through to the present. Along the way, we investigate Asian theater. This look at the history of theater is not intended to be definitive or complete, and in no way should it be viewed as a substitute for advanced courses which concentrate on theater history. At the same time, we believe that every important movement, every key figure, every relevant aspect of the development of theater is covered.

The final three chapters (Chapters 14, 15, and 16) are devoted to theater of the past hundred years. The forces that began a century ago—in realism and departures from realism, in acting techniques, in the emergence of the director, in scene and lighting design—have defined the theater we have today. As we point out in the final chapter, ours is a diverse, eclectic theater, rich in variety and innovation. We look at the many crosscurrents and trends that make up the theater which students of today and audiences of tomorrow will be attending.

The book has a number of features that we hope will be helpful and appealing to instructors and students alike. First and foremost, we have attempted to make the book immediate and alive—just the way theater should be. In Part Two, for

example, every period includes a feature called “Living History”: a narrative of an actual event, taking the reader back in time so that he or she has the sense of being present in the audience at a performance of *Antigone* in Athens in 441 B.C., or at the premiere of *Hamlet* at the Globe Theater in London.

This same sense of immediacy and personalization has been a goal, as well, in our writing style. We have attempted to write *Theater: The Lively Art* in the most readable language possible. To this end, we have dispensed with dry, pedantic language, and we have avoided wherever possible “laundry lists” of names, dates, and titles. The book contains a wealth of information, but we hope it is presented in a manner that makes it vivid and alive.

Another feature is the more than 160 photographs, many of them in color, which are directly tied to the text. The illustrations—both photographs and line drawings—do not exist in isolation but explain and enhance the material in the text. Moreover, the photographs have been selected to be dynamic and “dramatic” in and of themselves.

Within the chapters dealing with theater history, each section contains background information on the political, scientific, and cultural milieu in which theater developments unfold. For each period and country, there is in addition a “time line” listing landmark events and accomplishments in the social and political arenas on one side and significant theater events on the other.

Two other popular features of the second edition are retained in this third edition. One is plot summaries of plays, set aside in boxes within individual chapters. All together, eleven important plays, ranging from Greek to modern and including representative works by Asian, African-American, and women playwrights, are included. The summaries, moreover, are comprehensive accounts of the action of these plays.

Another feature is a series entitled “Getting Started in Theater.” In separate boxes throughout the first eight chapters, autobiographical accounts from playwrights, performers, directors, designers, and others explain how various individuals became attracted to theater, received their training, and were given their first opportunities to work in the theater. Students should find these firsthand accounts not only informative but insightful, providing them with a genuine sense of what involvement in theater means.

Please note that for quick reference the timelines, the plot summaries, the autobiographical boxes, and the “Living History” boxes are listed separately following the Table of Contents.

The appendix of *Theater: The Lively Art* will also prove helpful. It contains an expanded glossary of historical and technical terms in drama and theater, as well as a pronunciation guide for terms that may be difficult to pronounce.

Theater is an art form, and beyond that, it is one of the performing arts. As such its quality is elusive. Theater exists only at the moment when a performance occurs, and to study it in a book or classroom is to be one step removed from that immediate experience. This fact should always be kept in mind in a theater course taught in a classroom setting. Nevertheless, the experience of theater can be many times more meaningful if audience members understand a number of things: the component parts of theater, the various creative artists and technicians

who make it happen, the tradition and historical background from which theater springs, and the genre or movement of which a particular play is a part. It is our hope that *Theater: The Lively Art* will provide the knowledge and information to make this possible and that it will encourage and inspire students to become life-long audience members if not actual participants in theater.

Acknowledgments

There is a long list of colleagues and others who have helped to make this book possible and to whom we are deeply grateful. We thank Prof. J. Thomas Rimer and Prof. James V. Hatch for providing invaluable material on Asian theater and African-American theater respectively. Scott Walters developed the Instructor's Manual. John Sipes of the Oregon Shakespeare Festival and Barbara Acker of Arizona State University respectively, provided the movement and voice exercises in Chapter 2.

At Illinois State University, a number of people provided computer assistance. We would particularly like to thank Georgia Bennett, David Williams, David Kuntz, and Jody DeCremer. Steve Meckstroth, of Illinois State University's Milner Library, was also of great assistance, as were Kymberly Harris, Michelle Sullivan, Robyn Jackson, and Mary Ellen O'Hara, theater graduate assistants, in research and in a number of other areas.

The following people, who read and commented on the manuscript in various stages of development, made important contributions to the final result:

Jirel C. Benone, Glendale Community College; Gary Faircloth, East Carolina University; Anthony French, University of New Orleans; LaLonnice Lehman, Texas Christian University; William R. Lewis, Ph.D., Guilford Technical Community College; Stephen D. Malin, University of Memphis; David E. Miller, Suffolk County Community College; Keith B. Nagy, John Carroll University; Elizabeth Ramirez, University of Oregon; Robert Yowell, Northern Arizona University.

Finally—at McGraw-Hill—we are grateful to two superb editors, Cynthia Ward and Allison McNamara, who have been enormously supportive and helpful throughout. We extend our appreciation as well to our project manager, Alisa Watson and designer Crispin Prebys. We also express our deep thanks to and continued admiration for two longtime associates: Susan Gamer, our incomparable copy editor; and Inge King, the always talented and resourceful photography editor.

Edwin Wilson
Alvin Goldfarb

Preface	<i>xvii</i>
Introduction	1

PART I

Creating Theater

1 Audiences and Critics	17
2 Stage Performers	37
3 The Director and the Producer	57
4 Theater Spaces	71
5 Designers: Scenery and Costumes	89
6 Designers: Lighting and Sound	111
7 The Playwright: Subject, Focus, Purpose, and Viewpoint	129
8 The Playwright: Dramatic Structure and Characters	153
9 Profile of a Production	177

PART II

Theater Tradition and Theater Today

10 Greek and Roman Theater	191
11 Medieval and Asian Theater	215
12 Renaissance Theater	237
13 Theater from 1660 to 1875	269
14 Modern Theater: 1875 to 1945	301
15 Modern Theater: 1945 to 1990	325
16 Contemporary Trends	351
Glossary	365
Selected Bibliography	373
Index	379

Preface *xvii*
Introduction 1

Experiencing Theater 2
Theater as an Art Form 6
 What Is Art? 6
 The Art of Theater 9
Summary 13

PART 1

Creating Theater

CHAPTER 1

Audiences and Critics 17

The Theater Audience 18
 The “Audience Factor” 18
 How the Audience Participates 19
 Diversity of Audiences 20
African-American Theater 21
Play Synopsis: A Raisin in the Sun 23
Asian-American Theater 24
Hispanic Theater 24
Native American Theater 26
Feminist Theater 27

Gay and Lesbian Theater 28

The Theater Critic 30

What Is Criticism? 30

Getting Started in Theater—Mel Gussow: Critic 31

Critics and Reviewers 31

Preparing for Criticism 32

Criteria for Criticism 33

Descriptive versus Prescriptive Criticism 34

Summary 35

CHAPTER 2

Stage Performers 37

A Historical Perspective: Demands of Classical Acting 38

Three Challenges of Acting 40

Getting Started in Theater—Joan MacIntosh: Performer 41

Mastering the Craft of Acting 41

Making Characters Believable 45

Play Synopsis: *The Cherry Orchard* 49

Synthesis and Integration 54

Judging Performances 55

Summary 56

CHAPTER 3

The Director and the Producer 57

The Director 58

Evolution of the Director 58

The Auteur Director 59

The Director at Work 60

Getting Started in Theater—Richard Foreman: Director, Playwright,
and Designer 61

The Director's Collaborators 65

Getting Started in Theater—Zelda Fichlander: Director and Artistic Director 66

The Producer or Manager 68

Producers in Commercial Theater 68

Noncommercial Theaters 68

Summary 70

CHAPTER 4

Theater Spaces 71

Proscenium or Picture-Frame Stage: History and Characteristics 72

Thrust Stage: History and Characteristics 75

Arena Stage: History and Characteristics 81

Created or Found Spaces 84

Multifocus Environments 85

All-Purpose and Experimental Spaces 86

Summary 87

CHAPTER 5

Designers: Scenery and Costumes 89

Scene Design 90

The Scene Designer's Objectives 90

Getting Started in Theater—Robin Wagner: Scene Designer 91

Physical Aspects of Scene Design 95

The Process of Scene Design 100

Costume Design 101

The Costume Designer's Responsibilities 102

Getting Started in Theater—Jess Goldstein: Costume Designer 103

The Costume Designer's Objectives 103

Elements of Costume Design 106

The Costume Designer's Collaborators 109

Summary 110

CHAPTER 6

Designers: Lighting and Sound 111

Stage Lighting 112

Lighting in Theater History 112

Getting Started in Theater—Peggy Eisenhauer: Lighting Designer 113

Objectives of Lighting Design 113

Qualities of Stage Lighting 118

The Lighting Designer's Resources 120

The Lighting Designer's Collaborators 122

Sound Design 122

Sound Reproduction and Sound Reinforcement 123

Sound Technology 123

Special Effects in Lighting and Sound 126

Summary 127

CHAPTER 7

The Playwright: Subject, Focus, Purpose, and Viewpoint 129

The Playwright's Centrality 130

Getting Started in Theater—Emily Mann: Playwright–Director 131

The Playwright's Tasks 131

Subject 132

Focus and Emphasis 132

Dramatic Purpose 133

Play Synopsis: Tartuffe 134

Point of View: Dramatic Genres 135

What Is Genre? 135

Tragedy 136

Comedy 142

Heroic Drama 146

Melodrama 148

Domestic or Bourgeois Drama 148

Tragicomedy 149

Summary 152

CHAPTER 8

The Playwright: Dramatic Structure and Characters 153

Structure in Drama 154

Essentials of Dramatic Structure 155

Creating a Dramatic Structure 158

Getting Started in Theater—August Wilson: Playwright 159

Two Basic Structures: Climactic and Episodic 160

Other Dramatic Structures 166

Creating Dramatic Characters 168

Types of Dramatic Characters 168

Play Synopsis: *Mother Courage and Her Children* 170
Juxtaposition of Characters 174
Summary 175

CHAPTER 9

Profile of a Production 177

PART 2

Theater Tradition and Theater Today

CHAPTER 10

Greek and Roman Theater 191

Origins of Theater 192

Greece 193

Background: *The Golden Age of Greece* 193

Theater and Culture: *Greek Theater Emerges* 193

Timeline: *Greece* 194

Living History: *Antigone* 196

Greek Tragedy 198

Play Synopsis: *King Oedipus* 201

Greek Comedy 202

Theater Production in Greece 203

Dramatic Criticism in Greece: *Aristotle* 204

Later Greek Theater 204

Rome 205

Background: *Rome and Its Civilization* 205

Timeline: *Rome* 206

Theater and Culture in Rome 207

Popular Entertainment in Rome 207

Roman Comedy: *Plautus and Terence* 207

Living History: *The Menaechmi* 208

Roman Tragedy: *Seneca* 210

Dramatic Criticism in Rome: *Horace* 211

Theater Production in Rome 211

Decline of Roman Theater 212

Summary 214

CHAPTER 11

Medieval and Asian Theater 215

The Middle Ages 216

Background: Medieval Europe 216

Theater and Culture in the Middle Ages 216

Timeline: The Middle Ages 217

Medieval Drama: Mystery, Miracle, and Morality Plays 218

Living History: *Noah's Ark* 219

Medieval Theater Production 220

Asia 222

Background: Asian Theater 222

Timeline: Asia 223

Theater in India 224

Theater in China 225

Living History: *Sotoba Komachi* 229

Theater in Japan 230

Play Synopsis: *Sotoba Komachi* 232

Summary 236

CHAPTER 12

Renaissance Theater 237

Italy 238

Background: The Renaissance Era 238

Italian Theater: Commedia dell'Arte 238

Timeline: The Italian Renaissance 239

Living History: *Commedia dell'Arte* 240

Italian Dramatic Rules: The Neoclassical Ideals 242

Theater Production in Italy 242

England 247

Background: Elizabethan England 247

Elizabethan Drama 247

Timeline: The English Renaissance 248

Living History: *Hamlet* 250

Elizabethan Theater Production 252

Theater after Elizabeth's Reign 255

Spain 257

Background: The Spanish Golden Age 257

Spanish Drama 257

Timeline: The Spanish Golden Age 258

Living History: *The King, The Greatest Alcalde* 259

Theater Production in Spain 260

France 261

Background: France in the Seventeenth Century 261

Timeline: Neoclassical France 262

French Drama: The Neoclassical Era 263

Living History: *Tartuffe* 264

Theater Production in France 266

Summary 267

CHAPTER 13

Theater from 1660 to 1875 269

The English Restoration 270

Background: England in the Seventeenth Century 270

Restoration Drama: Comedies of Manners 270

Timeline: The English Restoration 271

Living History: *The Country Wife* 272

Theater Production in the Restoration 274

Play Synopsis: *The Way of the World* 275

The Eighteenth Century 278

Background: A More Complex World 278

Timeline: The Eighteenth Century 279

Eighteenth-Century Drama: New Dramatic Forms 280

Theater Production in the Eighteenth Century 282

Living History: *The Marriage of Figaro* 284

The Nineteenth Century 289

Background: A Time of Social Change 289

Theater in the Nineteenth-Century Life 289

Timeline: The Nineteenth Century, 1800–1875 290

Nineteenth-Century Dramatic Forms 292

Theater Production in the Nineteenth Century 294

Summary 298

CHAPTER 14**Modern Theater: 1875 to 1945 301**

The Birth of Realism 302

Background: The Modern Era 302**Timeline: 1875–1915 303***Theatrical Realism* 304*Realistic Playwrights* 305**Play Synopsis: *A Doll's House* 306***Realism and Naturalism* 308*Producers of Realism: Independent Theaters* 309**Living History: *The Sea Gull* 310***Realistic Theater between 1915 and 1945* 312**Timeline: 1915–1945 314**

Departures from Realism 315

Antirealist Playwrights: Ibsen, Strindberg, and Wedekind 316*Symbolism* 316*Antirealist Designers: Appia and Craig* 317*Russian Theatricalism: Meyerhold* 318*Early Eclectics* 319*Departures from Realism: 1915–1945* 319

Totalitarianism, the Second World War, and Theater 323

Summary 324

CHAPTER 15**Modern Theater: 1945 to 1990 325**

Postwar Realistic Theater 326

Background: The Postwar Era 326**Timeline: 1945–1995 327***American Selective Realism* 328**Play Synopsis: *Death of a Salesman* 330***The “Angry Young Men” in England and Documentary Drama in Germany* 331

Experimentation and Departures from Realism: 1945 to 1980 331

Existentialism and Theater of the Absurd 331**Living History: *Waiting for Godot* 332***Experimental Theater* 334