

# THE ESSENTIAL THEATRE

EIGHTH EDITION

OSCAR G. BROCKETT  
ROBERT J. BALL



# The Essential Theatre

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Eighth Edition



Oscar G. Brockett

*University of Texas at Austin*

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*University of the Incarnate Word*

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# *The Essential Theatre*

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Eighth Edition



# Preface

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**B**ehind this edition lies almost forty years of publication. Although *The Essential Theatre* was first published 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 eighth edition.

Like the earlier versions, this edition is divided into three parts. Part One addresses basic issues and features related to the nature of theatre, to the role of audiences, to the varied criteria for judging theatrical performances, and to dramatic structure and style. Part Two looks at various theatrical experiences from theatre's past and present. These experiences suggest that, as a vital form of creative expression, theatre changes to reflect the dynamics of the cultures within which it exists. Part Three provides an overview of theatre production today: the principles, practices, and procedures used in the creation of theatre.

As with the previous editions, *The Essential Theatre* is intended for the introductory course in which an overview both serves as a foundation

for those intending to major in theatre (future theatre-makers) and provides insights and understanding for audience members (future theatre-goers). 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 or use all of the material in the book. For instance, some instructors may wish to use only some of the chapters in Part Two, 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.

*The Essential Theatre* also features an extensive bibliography as a guide to additional sources about the topics discussed in each chapter. 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 that script, illustrate the difference between text on the printed page and the enacted script on stage—the difference between drama and theatre.

Because students typically will not have read a wide variety of plays before taking an introductory theatre course, fifteen examples cited in *The Essential Theatre* are also included in a companion anthology titled *Plays for the Theatre*, eighth edition, edited by Oscar G. Brockett and Robert J. Ball and published by Wadsworth/Thomson Learning. These plays serve as foundations for discussions of various types of theatrical experience and include Sophocles' *Oedipus Rex*, the anonymously composed *Noah and His Sons*, Shakespeare's *Hamlet, Prince of Denmark*, 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*, Wilson's *Ma Rainey's Black Bottom*, Sanchez-Scott's *Roosters*, Vogel's *How I Learned to Drive*, Zeami's *The Shrine in the Fields*, and Soyinka's *The Strong Breed*. 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 Wadsworth/Thomson Learning.

## Features of This Book

- Discussions of theatre as a form of art, critical approaches to theatre, the role of an audience, and script analysis serve as a foundation for students, introducing them to the craft and encouraging them to cultivate an appreciation for the theatre arts.
- The history of theatre—from the theatre of the ancient Greeks; to the major movements of the medieval, Renaissance, Enlightenment, and modern eras; to today's diversity of stage performances is covered.
- How each of the theatre arts functions as a part of the total production is covered in detail: theatrical space and production design, playwriting and dramaturgy, directing and producing, acting, scene design, costume design and makeup, and lighting and sound design.
- All discussions in the text are supported by numerous interesting and meaningful examples of plays, players, and playwrights.
- Over two hundred photos and diagrams, including a number of historical images, illustrate important concepts and bring theatre to life.

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## *New to This Edition*

- Chapters 1 through 3 have been tightened and trimmed slightly to address several issues more effectively. For example, in Chapter 3 the discussion of the methods by which character is revealed is now expressed in an easily viewable bulleted format. In addition, Chapters 11 through 17 have been tightened and trimmed to focus more on general processes rather than technical detail, and Chapters 4 through 9 have been updated.
- A new chapter, Chapter 10: Asian and African Theatre, makes the overview of theatrical experiences more comprehensive. Additionally, Chapter 9: Contemporary Theatre and Its

Diversity has been expanded. Finally, in these chapters significant changes have been made in the choice of plays discussed in depth.

- The feature boxes in the text have been updated, color-coded, and categorized to highlight enrichment topics: Practitioners and Theorists; Practices and Styles; Society, Art, and Culture; and Ideas and Influences. These boxes supplement the text, giving special emphasis to interesting topics and pertinent persons in theatre.
- Completely new to this edition are technology resources intended to assist both students and instructors in using the book imaginatively. At



the end of each chapter is at least one InfoTrac® College Edition exercise designed to be a source of information for research, an activity that can lead to further discussion of the issues introduced in the text, and, generally, an opportunity for students to enlarge their understanding of the field. This edition is also accompanied by the *Essential Theatre* Web site, which features student resources such as chapter outlines, an online glossary, and study aids; the InfoTrac College Edition exercises featured in the book

and a link to InfoTrac College Edition; links to international, national, and local news organizations that can help students fulfill research assignments; and an online appendix, Opportunities to Work in the Theatre.

- Perhaps the most notable change in this edition is a beautiful new four-color design and the addition of many new color photographs. The new design is intended not only to provide more visual interest but also to improve readability.

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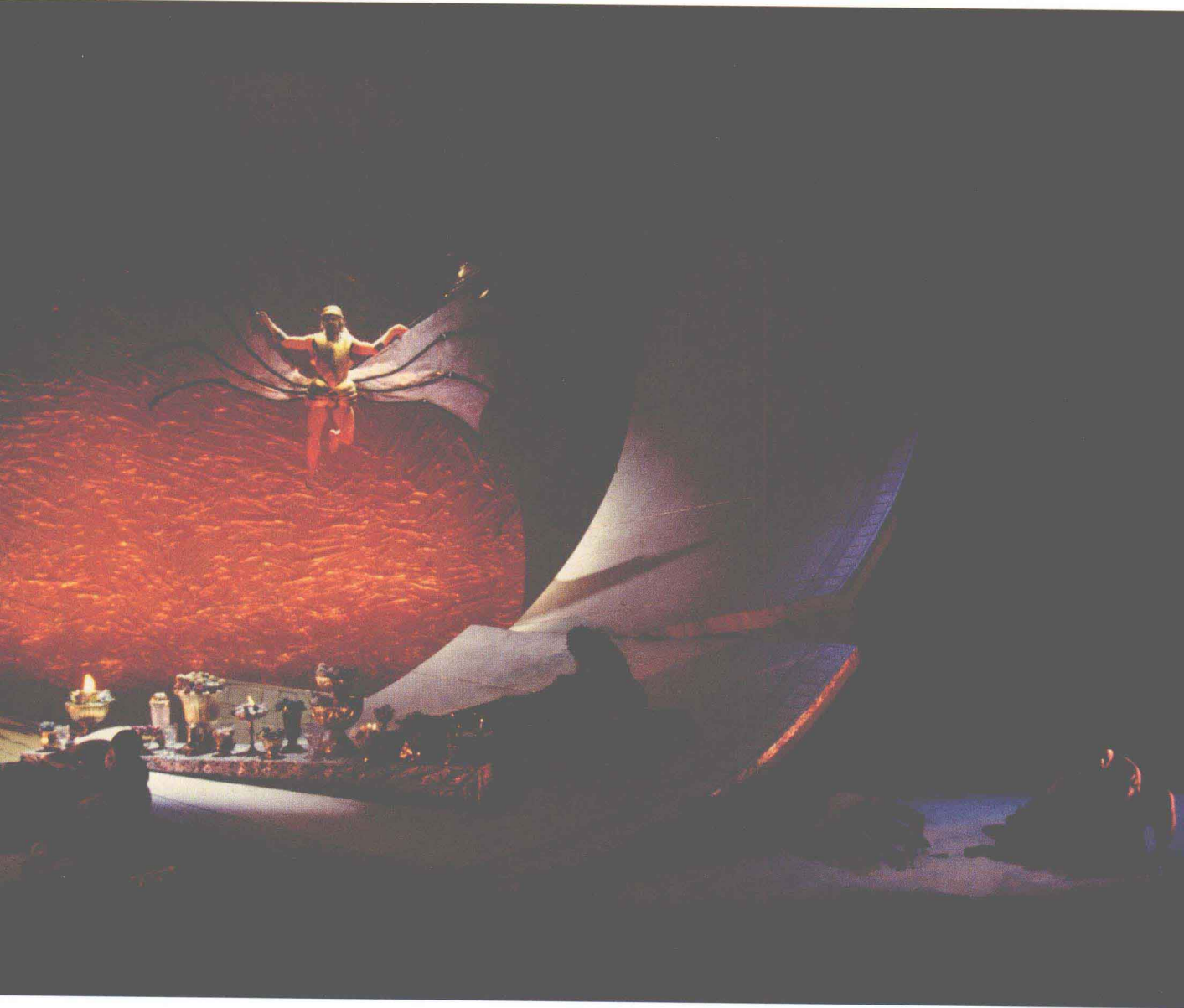
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It is impossible to list all of those persons to whom we are indebted. The bibliography indicates most of the sources we have used, and captions indicate those persons and organizations who have permitted us to include their illustrations. In addition to this list, we want to thank Jodi Karjala at Trinity University for her assistance, as well as the following colleagues for their insightful and useful comments: Kim Axline, Binghamton University, State University of New York; Valerie B. Brugh, Arkansas Tech University; Lyn Dutson, Mesa Community College; Thomas Ellis, California State University, Fresno; Melissa Gibson, California State University, Fresno;

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T. Charles Erickson



Shakespeare's *The Tempest* as produced by the American Repertory Theatre. Seen here is Benjamin Evett as Ariel. Directed by Ron Daniels; designed by John Conklin; costumes by Gabriel Berry; lighting by Chris Parry.

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