

Instructor's Manual to Accompany  
Wilson  
**THE  
THEATER  
EXPERIENCE**  
Fifth Edition



Edwin Wilson  
S. E. Walters

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**INSTRUCTOR'S  
MANUAL**

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INSTRUCTOR'S MANUAL TO ACCOMPANY  
WILSON: THE THEATER EXPERIENCE

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## PREFACE

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*The Theater Experience*, Fifth Edition, has been prepared with the instructor very much in mind. Many aspects of the text are in themselves teaching aids: the division of the book into six broad categories easily comprehended by the student; the many illustrations, each tied closely to the text; the detailed summaries at the end of each chapter; and the five carefully planned appendixes. Also, the book has been written with a sequential logic—it moves in a natural progression from the audience to the performers and director, then to the playwright, and then to the designers (of environment, visual elements, and so forth). Finally, the elements of the total experience are brought together.

One important point for instructors to bear in mind is that although the book has a strong internal logic, it nevertheless has great flexibility. An instructor who chooses to change the order in which subjects are discussed can do so without impairing the book's usefulness. In other words, *The Theater Experience* should be adapted by the instructor to suit his or her particular needs; and the Instructor's Manual was prepared by the author, and has now been revised and updated by Scott Walters, to aid in that task.

As with the text, flexibility is the keynote of the manual. The manual does not pretend to be comprehensive or exhaustive; rather, it offers suggestions in several categories for questions, exercises, and discussion topics which can form the basis of classroom work.

The manual has a chapter corresponding to each chapter of the text. In turn, each chapter of the manual has five sections:

**OVERVIEW AND OUTLINE** The first section consists of a capsule overview of the text chapter, and a listing of all the headings and subheadings in traditional outline format (I, A, 1, a). These provide a synopsis of the chapter, useful for previewing, reviewing, and note-taking; in addition, the instructor may want to reproduce the outlines as handouts for the students.

**IDENTIFY OR DEFINE** Next, there is a list of significant names or terms found in the chapter. These could serve as a way to initiate discussion in class: e.g., "Who is Stanislavski?" or "What is a ground plan?" They can also be used on quizzes.

**QUESTIONS FOR STUDENT ESSAYS OR DISCUSSION** Third is a selection of questions that can be assigned as homework, given as essay items on examinations or quizzes, or presented to the class as a basis for group discussion. Some of these questions are worded so that they can be conveyed verbatim to the students (that is, "you" means the student). Some are addressed to the instructor, who will shape them for presentation to the students (these are preceded by the notation *Instructor*).

**EXERCISES AND DEMONSTRATIONS** The fourth section has suggestions for demonstrations by the instructor or improvisations and exercises for class participation. These items are addressed to the instructor, who will want to adapt them to his or her individual situation. For instance, if a class is small and the classroom is fairly spacious, the class can take part in some exercises as a whole; but if the class is large, it can be divided into smaller units. Instructors who have the means to use exercises might want to expand this area, using additional material from the many books now available on creative dramatics and other appropriate subjects. In situations where it is not feasible for a class to engage in exercises—either because the class is too large or the classroom space is too small—these topics can be adapted as topics or starting points for discussion.

**SUGGESTED PLAYS** The fifth and last section recommends plays to be read, or read and then discussed. Obviously, many more plays are listed than the class will be able to read in a semester. The instructor may want to cover no more than three or four plays in addition to the text. The lists offer suggestions of appropriate plays for each chapter. Should the instructor decide to assign a play, say, every fourth chapter, a play can be chosen from the lists at the end of the four chapters in question. Instructors can also use the plays on these lists in lectures or for purposes of illustration in discussions.

It should be noted that although the manual has no tests or quizzes as such, instructors will find it simple to make up short or long quizzes and even examinations based on "Identify or Define" and "Questions for Student Essays or Discussion." In addition, of course, specific material in the text—such as chapter summaries—will be useful for this purpose.

Finally, at the end of the manual is a *Student's Guide for Writing Papers* on plays seen. This guide indicates specific areas and questions for students to consider in describing various aspects of a production. It can be used in conjunction with chapters in the text covering specific areas, such as scenery, characters, directing, costumes, and lighting.

We hope you will find that this Instructor's Manual helps you and your students to get the most out of *The Theater Experience*.

*Edwin Wilson*

*S. E. Walters*

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# CONTENTS

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Preface	v
Introduction	1
 <b>PART ONE THE AUDIENCE</b>	
1 The Role of the Audience	7
2 The Imagination of the Audience	11
3 Background and Expectations of the Audience	15
4 The Critic and the Audience	19
 <b>PART TWO THE PERFORMERS AND THE DIRECTOR</b>	
5 Acting: Offstage and On	25
6 Stage Acting	28
7 The Director and the Producer	32

**PART THREE THE PLAYWRIGHT:  
DRAMATIC STRUCTURE AND DRAMATIC CHARACTERS**

<b>8 The Playwright and Conventions of Dramatic Structure</b>	<b>39</b>
<b>9 Dramatic Structure: Climactic and Episodic Forms</b>	<b>43</b>
<b>10 Dramatic Structure: Other Forms</b>	<b>46</b>
<b>11 Musical Theater</b>	<b>49</b>
<b>12 Dramatic Characters</b>	<b>53</b>

**PART FOUR THEATRICAL GENRES**

<b>13 Purpose and Point of View</b>	<b>59</b>
<b>14 Tragedy and Other Serious Drama</b>	<b>62</b>
<b>15 Comedy and Tragicomedy</b>	<b>65</b>

**PART FIVE THE DESIGNERS:  
ENVIRONMENT AND VISUAL ELEMENTS**

<b>16 Stage Spaces</b>	<b>71</b>
<b>17 Scenery</b>	<b>75</b>
<b>18 Stage Costumes</b>	<b>79</b>
<b>19 Lighting and Sound</b>	<b>83</b>

**PART SIX THE TOTAL EXPERIENCE**

<b>20 Bringing the Elements Together</b>	<b>89</b>
<b>Student's Guide to Writing Papers</b>	<b>93</b>



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# INTRODUCTION

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## **\* OVERVIEW AND OUTLINE \***

The literary and visual arts exist as separate artifacts, whereas the performing arts exist only when they occur. A script can be read like a novel, but it is actually a blueprint for performance. Seeing a performance is the essence of theater and the theater experience.

The theater experience can be broken down into five components: (1) audience; (2) performances of actors and actresses; (3) structure of the work; (4) point of view incorporated in the work (tragic, comic, etc.); and (5) environment and visual elements. The fusion of these five elements results in the theater experience.

### **I. THEATER AS A TRANSITORY ART**

### **II. THE ELEMENTS OF THEATER**

## **\* IDENTIFY OR DEFINE \***

- 1 Tribal ceremony**
- 2 Perpetual present tense**
- 3 Performing arts**
- 4 Literary dialogue**
- 5 Five elements of the theater experience**

## **\* QUESTIONS FOR STUDENT ESSAYS OR DISCUSSION \***

- 1 Explain the essential differences between the literary and visual arts on the one hand and the performing arts on the other.**
- 2 Describe the variables which affect a scene presented on the stage (the performers' ages, personalities, vocal qualities, gestures, etc.).**
- 3 Occasionally, a number of years after its original run, a play is revived reuniting the original cast. Would the performances in this second run be identical to the first run? What factors would make the revival different?**
- 4 As Bernard Beckerman says, a novel can be "put away, taken up, reread." However, once a play begins, the audience cannot stop it or have certain parts repeated. Discuss the ways in which this might affect how plays are constructed and what types of subject matter they can use.**

5 In the Introduction, a script is compared to a musical score or the blueprint of a building. What other comparisons might be made? (Possibilities include a diagram of a football play, a computer flow sheet, and a road map.)

### ※ EXERCISES AND DEMONSTRATIONS ※

1 George Bernard Shaw prepared separate editions of his plays designed specifically to be read. With the class, examine the extensive stage directions for these versions of his plays. How do they differ from traditional stage directions? How do they help the reader to visualize details in the absence of a staging?

2 Show the score of a piece of music to students to illustrate that the score is not the finished product and that it bears no immediate resemblance to what one hears. A record of the same composition might be played to underscore the difference.

3 Describe a brief scene from a play seen or read by the class and point out how all the elements of theater (acting, direction, set, lighting, etc.) work together simultaneously.

4 Discuss tribal rituals and ceremonies in terms of their theatrical elements.

5 Find plays of which several film versions have been made (suggestions: *Hamlet*, *Julius Caesar*, *Our Town*, *The Glass Menagerie*). Show different versions of the same scene. How do they differ? How are they similar? What effect do different actors have on the way one perceives the characters? Compare the costumes and scenery.

### ※ SUGGESTED PLAYS ※

Edward Albee's *Zoo Story*

Leroi Jones's *Dutchman*

Eugene O'Neill's *Long Day's Journey into Night*

Sam Shepard's *Fool for Love*

These are plays with simple, direct confrontations to point up the dynamic, ever-changing nature of theater.



# PART

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# ONE

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## THE AUDIENCE



# 1

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## THE ROLE OF THE AUDIENCE

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## ✱ OVERVIEW AND OUTLINE ✱

The actor and the audience are the two fundamental elements of theater. The presence of live performers distinguishes theater from films and television, where audiences see only images. Theater is not only a direct, personal experience but also a *group* experience. By joining with others we take added pleasure in what we see and hear.

A distinction is made between theater as an observed experience and theater as a participatory experience (creative dramatics, sociodrama, etc.) in which everyone takes an active, physical part. Participatory theater is a separate study. This textbook will focus on theater as an observed experience: what it means to go to the theater, what we see while we are there, and what happens behind the scenes.

- I. THE ACTOR-AUDIENCE RELATIONSHIP
  - A. The Special Nature of Theater: A Contrast with Film
  - B. The Chemistry of Actor-Audience Contact
- II. THE GROUP EXPERIENCE
  - A. Psychology of Groups
  - B. How Audience Makeup Affects the Theater Experience
- III. THE SEPARATE ROLES OF PERFORMERS AND SPECTATORS
  - A. How Should the Audience Be Involved?
  - B. Audience Participation through Direct Action

## ✱ IDENTIFY OR DEFINE ✱

- 1 Empathy
- 2 Ritual as theater
- 3 "Live" performance
- 4 Group experience
- 5 Participatory theater
- 6 Sociodrama
- 7 Psychodrama



## ※ QUESTIONS FOR STUDENT ESSAYS OR DISCUSSION ※

- 1 Discuss differences between an image (picture, reproduction) and the object itself.
- 2 Describe a personal experience of a direct confrontation with other people which differed from your expectations—for example, applying for a job, asking for a date, or trying to get a grade changed.
- 3 [Instructor:] One of the significant aspects of the actor-audience relationship in the theater is that there is always a possibility that something unique will happen: a mistake, an accident, or, on the other hand, an inspiration that lifts the performance to new heights. Discuss what types of things might happen during a performance. Have the students ever been present at such an event? What was the audience's reaction?
- 4 [Instructor:] Music has faced many of the same technological challenges as theater. Discuss why the students will go to a live rock concert instead of simply staying home and listening to a recording or watching a videotape of the concert.
- 5 Discuss the psychology of groups. In what ways do people behave differently when they are part of a large group—for example, at a football game, a rock concert, or a riot?
- 6 Laughter is greatly influenced by groups. What does it feel like to be the only one in a group to laugh loudly at something? What does it feel like to laugh along with everyone else? How would you explain these feelings?
- 7 Give examples of various kinds of homogeneous and heterogeneous audiences. What types of plays might appeal to different types of audiences? What might happen if the play does not match its audience—for instance, if a pro-communist play was performed for an audience of American Legionnaires, or a rock musical was performed for an audience of senior citizens?

## ※ EXERCISES AND DEMONSTRATIONS ※

- 1 Have a student relate a story to the class and note when impersonation appears—that is, when narration stops and “acting” begins: role playing, imitation, etc.
- 2 If you have a home movie of yourself when you were much younger, show it to your students. Make a list of the ways that the instructor of today, in the classroom, differs from his or her image. (For example: The image is two-dimensional, the instructor is three-dimensional. The image is in the past; the instructor is in the present. The image cannot interact with the students; the instructor can.)