

THE INFLUENCE OF THE THEATER AND ITS DRAMA  
UPON THE EDUCATION OF MAN

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## CHAPTER I

### ORIENTATION TO THE STUDY

#### Introduction

Man grants the right to survive and endure only to that which serves him; any existence must be justifiable in terms of its worth to mankind. Man, being inherently self-centered, cannot tolerate the continued presence of an entity that does not contribute to his well-being.

The theater has existed as a part of human society since the advent of that society. Man has either actively supported or passively accepted the theater throughout recorded history. It is difficult ". . . to say how long the human race has indulged in some form of action which may be called drama. As far back as records go, men are discovered executing rites which must be classed as theatrical. . . ."<sup>1</sup>

The existence of the theater, an existence condoned by a self-centered mankind, must therefore have a justification in terms of service to mankind. How then does the theater serve man?

This query motivates the present study; the writer

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<sup>1</sup>Glen Hughes, The Story of the Theatre (New York: Samuel French, 1941), p. 3.

is seeking an answer to the question, "How does the theater serve man?" The theater provides entertainment and amusement, true; but is there not a more enduring and a more basic function to theatrical art? Is not the foundation of the theatrical institution to be found in its educational stature? Does not the vitality of the theater derive from its educative role?

The educational character of the theater has been long recognized by theater professional and layman alike. The present study is an attempt to substantiate this intangible belief and to express the educative service of the theater which helps ". . . mankind to a better human understanding, to a deeper social pity, and to a wider tolerance of all that is life."<sup>1</sup>

### Statement of the Problem

The problem embraces a study of the theater as a social institution transmitting cultural heritage and a presentation of corroborative illustrations, both past and current, of the theater's educational character.

### Purposes of the Study

The purposes of the study are twofold. The primary purpose is to affirm the hypothesis that the theater is an

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<sup>1</sup>John Gassner, A Treasury of the Theatre (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1957), I, xi, quoting Arthur Hopkins.

educative force by synthesizing the contributions of authorities in the fields of theater and education. In this way, the platitudes of the educational value of the theater can be reduced to a verity substantiated by factual and illustrative material. A secondary purpose of the study is to authenticate the hypothesis that the theater is a universal social institution.

### Definitions of Terms

The following definitions have been established for this study:

Influence: "The act or the power of producing an effect without apparent force or direct authority."<sup>1</sup> The writer, for the purposes of this study, conceives the influence of the theatrical institution to be the continual communication of an effect upon surrounding elements by the methods intrinsic to its peculiar character.

Theater and Its Drama: "Wherever and whenever humans have progressed beyond the mere struggle for physical existence, to gods and recreation and self-expression, there has been theater in some sense. . . ."<sup>2</sup> The

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<sup>1</sup>Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary (2d ed.; Springfield, Mass.: G. and C. Merriam Co., 1953), p. 430.

<sup>2</sup>Sheldon Cheney, The Theatre (New York: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1945), p. 1.

theater is a social institution that man has fostered in each era of human civilization; its vitality derives partially from the educative function of the theater in the scheme of life. Throughout history man has found in the theater a reflection of his existence in a contemporary setting and through the theater a deeper insight into his cultural heritage.

Drama, as the term is used in this study, refers to the literature of the theater, the plays written for and presented in the theaters of history.

The identities of the theater and drama are fused; they are interdependent because "the artistic medium of drama is the theater."<sup>1</sup>

The Education of Man: "Education is the acquisition of the art of the utilization of knowledge."<sup>2</sup> There is an art to the wise use of knowledge; to acquire this art is to acquire education. Man educates himself

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<sup>1</sup>Harold R. Walley, The Book of the Play (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1950), p. 3.

<sup>2</sup>Alfred North Whitehead, The Aims of Education (New York: The New American Library of World Literature, 1955), p. 16.

and achieves higher self-development as he acquires knowledge and the ability to utilize this knowledge for the betterment of himself, his society, and his world. The education of man, as the term is used here, implies the accumulation and continuation by a culture of the elements of its social heritage.

### Limitations to the Study

Certain limitations have been established with respect to this study. The concept of education is divorced from strict limitation to the classroom or any typical situation for formalized learning. Education is considered in its broadest connotation: that of the acquisition of knowledges, skills, and understandings. This concept of education is applied to all people as members of a common world community, limited to no one nation, race, social class, nor ethnic group.

Consideration of theatrical performance is limited to the dramatic presentation of literature, excluding such theatrical art forms as dance, music, recitation, et cetera. Theatrical performance is limited also to live productions before live audiences, excluding such media as motion pictures, radio, and television except as incidental references.

Of all available material, only those illustrations are used which appear to be the most representative.

### Survey of Previous Studies

A survey of available sources revealed no study which has been conducted prior to the present one which is identical with it. Several studies, however, were completed which contain information of value to the present investigation; these studies are reviewed below. References consulted to determine previous studies related or similar to the present study include "The Catalogue File of Theses and Dissertations Available at the Library of the Texas Woman's University, Denton, Texas," "An Index of Graduate Work in Speech,"<sup>1</sup> "Abstracts of Theses in the Field of Speech,"<sup>2</sup> and "Doctoral Dissertations in Speech: Works in Progress."<sup>3</sup>

Daniel Spartakus Krempel<sup>4</sup> explores the relationship between changing concepts of the theater and the political, economic, scientific, religious, and social concepts of various societies. The study is limited to the theater of European societies from the Middle Ages to the present; the world-view of a collective society is shown in each period as

<sup>1</sup>Franklin H. Klower, "An Index of Graduate Work in Speech," Speech Monographs, Vols. I-XXV (1934-1951).

<sup>2</sup>Clyde W. Dow, "Abstracts of Theses in the Field of Speech," Speech Monographs, Vols. I-XXV (1934-1951).

<sup>3</sup>J. Jeffery Auer, "Doctoral Dissertations in Speech: Works in Progress," Speech Monographs, Vols. I-XXV (1934-1951).

<sup>4</sup>Daniel Spartakus Krempel, "The Theatre in Relation to Art and to the Social Order from the Middle Ages to the Present" (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Department of Speech, University of Illinois, 1954).

illustrated by the theater of the respective period. The present study differs from Krempel's study in that Krempel relates the theater exclusively to art and to the social order, whereas the present study emphasizes the educational aspect of the theater. The present study is similar in that emphasis is placed on the relationship of the theater to the period in which it exists, expressing and reflecting the culture of the times.

Frank Stein<sup>1</sup> articulates a philosophy of the theater existing in a Christian-Democrat commonwealth and establishes criteria for evaluating works of theater as both art and amusement. Stein expresses the belief that the play teaches in the sense that experience teaches, rather than instructing morally or intellectually. The present study, while essentially different in approach, has been benefited by Stein's discussion of the theater as an art.

Jan Hodges McConnell<sup>2</sup> illustrates the value of the teaching of music in bettering international understanding and lessening prejudice. The most successful and permanent learning results from an appeal to interests and is achieved by the relation of material to be learned to some aspect of

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<sup>1</sup>Frank Stein, "A Philosophy of Theater in a Christian-Democratic Commonwealth from which Criteria can be Drawn to Evaluate Works of Theater as Both a Fine Art and an Amusement" (unpublished Master's thesis, Department of Speech, University of Denver, 1955).

<sup>2</sup>Jan Hodges McConnell, "Teaching International Understanding Through Music" (unpublished Master's Thesis, College of Education, Texas Woman's University [formerly Texas State College for Women], 1953).

the learner's experience. McConnell illustrates the application of this principle to the teaching of international understanding through the fine arts, specifically music. McConnell points out the value of guidance in developing an appreciation of the masters of the arts; this appreciation assists the individual in finding the heartbeat of a nation or a race. Although it deals exclusively with the educational medium of music, McConnell's study has been of value to the present study because both music and the theater are art forms through which international understanding can be fostered. Both McConnell's study and the present study consider increased international understanding to be one of the basic goals of education.

Willouise Low Barron<sup>1</sup> states that the task of educating for international understanding goes beyond the confines of mere formal instruction. To understand peoples of the world, it is necessary to learn to respect the viewpoints of others, to learn to cooperate and work with them, and to learn to sense their feelings and emotions. Although dwelling exclusively on the presentation of material to increase international understanding as this can be accomplished in the classroom, the philosophy of the value of international understanding expressed by Barron is similar to that of the writer of the present study.

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<sup>1</sup>Willouise Low Barron, "Teaching Youth Broader Concepts of International Understanding" (unpublished Master's Thesis, College of Education, Texas Woman's University [formerly Texas State College for Women], 1951).

Louise Henderson<sup>1</sup> concentrates on the achievements in international education through the United States Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization. Of interest to the writer of the present study were Henderson's review of the place of international education in society from the Greek times to the present and her summary of the activities of the International Theater Institute.

### Organization of the Study

The following chapters present the concept of the theater as a social institution in the role of an educative force. Prior to the investigation of specific educational areas of the theater, a concept of the theater must be established. This is the purpose of Chapter II: to present a working concept of the theater. First, the theater is defined as an art. Secondly, consideration is given to the theater in a social context, defining the theater as a social institution and illustrating it as a reflection of the times in which it exists. Finally, the concept of the theater as an educative force is presented, emphasizing its influence in increasing international understanding.

Through the presentation of illustrations from dramatic history, Chapter III examines the specific areas in which

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<sup>1</sup>Louise Henderson, "International Achievements in Education Through UNESCO" (unpublished Master's thesis, College of Education, Texas Woman's University [formerly Texas State College for Women], 1951).

the educational impact of the theater is most apparent. The theater is analyzed as an educational medium for religious instruction, for establishing and supporting social custom, and for enriching cultural and intellectual climate.

Chapter IV presents the theater as an educative force in the modern world. The study of theatrical history and plays of past eras tends to clarify the cultural heritage of modern civilizations. This chapter also includes a discussion of those theatrical factors operating in the modern world community which enhance international understanding.

Chapter V serves to summarize the major aspects of the study, integrating these into a definite statement establishing the theater as a social institution and justifying its existence as an educative force.

### Summary

Chapter I has presented an orientation to the present study. The introduction to the study stated the need for an existence to be justifiable in terms of its worth to mankind, thereby earning the right to endure. Elaboration on this concept revealed that the theater, having existed throughout history, must have such a justification. It was suggested that the justification of the theatrical existence is to be found in its educational character.

The statement of the problem was presented as: the problem embraces a study of the theater as a social institution

transmitting cultural heritage and a presentation of corroborative illustrations, both past and current, of the theater's educational character. The following were stated as the purposes of the study: to affirm the hypothesis that the theater is an educative force and to present a concept of the theater as a universal social institution.

Definitions were recorded as established for the terms "influence," "theater and its drama," and "the education of man." Limitations of the study were itemized as including: education considered in its broadest connotation and as applicable to all peoples; theatrical performances limited to the live dramatic presentation of literature before live audiences; and the use of the most representative illustrations.

Sources utilized in the research for previous related studies were enumerated. Related studies by Krempel, Stein, McConnell, Barron, and Henderson were reviewed.

The organization of the present study was introduced: Chapter II to present a working concept of the theater; Chapter III to present illustrations of the specific areas in which the educational influence of the theater is apparent; Chapter IV to present the theater as an educative force in the modern world, emphasizing its application in international relations; and Chapter VII to present a summary of the major aspects of the study.

Chapter II presents and analyzes a concept of the theater as an art, as an institution in a social context, and as an educative force.

## CHAPTER II

### A CONCEPT OF THE THEATER

#### Introduction

The purpose of Chapter II is to establish a definitive concept of the nature of the theater. The theater ". . . has been a powerful influence on human civilization for over 2500 years."<sup>1</sup> It can be assumed that the theater, existing so long and exerting so powerful an influence, must be a highly complex organism. This chapter is an attempt to examine the complex nature of the theater, to investigate the ". . . many strands which are woven into the fiber . . ."<sup>2</sup> of the theater.

"Education, society, theatre -- three great branches of the tree of Man. . . . These three things are closely inter-related and . . . they serve to nourish one another."<sup>3</sup> This statement by Dudley Nichols introduces the organization of Chapter II, in which the theater, society, and education are shown to be closely inter-related. The nature of the theater is presented first in terms of its identity as an art. Secondly,

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<sup>1</sup>Frank M. Whiting, An Introduction to the Theatre (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1954), p. 5.

<sup>2</sup>Gassner, op. cit., I, xiii.

<sup>3</sup>Dudley Nichols, "Theatre, Society, Education," Educational Theatre Journal, Vol. VIII, No. 3 (October, 1956), p. 179.

the theater is discussed as a social institution reflecting the society which nurtures it. Finally, the correlation between the theater and education is analyzed.

### The Theater as an Art

It is an acknowledged fact that for every authoritative definition, there is an opposing academic line of thought. It is not feasible, therefore, to advance an unimpeachable or irrevocable definition of the abstraction, "an art." It is possible only to state the definitions advanced by several authorities, to relate the theater to these, and finally to formulate a concept of the theater as an art.

An art can be defined as that which is aesthetic in principle and compounded of knowledgeable skill and tasteful technique.<sup>1</sup> This definition requires that an art possess an aesthetic quality, that it be a ". . . creation of beauty, the expression of thought or feeling in a form that seems beautiful or sublime."<sup>2</sup> Theatrical art has been termed one in which ". . . spiritual light illuminates human living,"<sup>3</sup> thereby making the play a dramatic expression of human thought and feeling which gratifies man's desire for beautiful, spiritual, and sublime experiences. This indicates that the theater

<sup>1</sup>Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary, op. cit., p. 50.

<sup>2</sup>Will Durant, The Story of Civilization, Vol. I: Our Oriental Heritage (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1954), p. 83.

<sup>3</sup>Cheney, op. cit., p. 1.

meets the aesthetic requirement of an art.

The foregoing definition requires also that an art be the result of the application of skill, taste, and technique. The combined skill of playwright, actors, and technicians make possible the success of any theatrical venture. This success depends on their selective taste and their ability to employ good theatrical technique. The theater, therefore, qualifies as an art in terms of the application of skill, taste, and technique.

In a second definition, works of art are thought of as ". . . human experiences translated into forms that we apprehend through our senses."<sup>1</sup> The theater meets the criteria of an art implied in this definition. The subject matter or content of a play is presented through the actions and reactions of the characters around whom the plot revolves. Theatrical performances are designed to appeal to the senses of sight and sound of the audience; what is seen on and heard from the stage conveys the meaning of the play. The theater, therefore, can be termed an art because it presents human experiences to the visual and auditory senses.

A third definition states that an art ". . . can be thought of as a restatement of an experience in one part of life in terms of another part of life."<sup>2</sup> Here, again, the

<sup>1</sup>Helen Gardner, Art Through the Ages (3d ed.; New York: Harcourt, Brace, and Company, 1926), p. 1.

<sup>2</sup>Stark Young, The Theater (New York: George H. Doran Co., 1927), p. 26.

theater can be defended as an art: it presents life's activities and experiences in terms of a staged performance.

"Theater art is that one of the fine arts whose media are human actors and the stage."<sup>1</sup> On the stage an actor has the power " . . . to reveal. To move in the pattern of a great drama, to let its reality shine through. There is no greater art than this."<sup>2</sup>

Good theater, being the ". . . art where all arts meet,"<sup>3</sup> is much more than mere entertainment. It is the most personal of the arts<sup>4</sup> and the most human of the arts.<sup>5</sup> Because of its personal and human qualities, the theatrical art fulfills the requirements stated in a fourth definition of art: "Art reaches across the barriers of time and space. It penetrates the barriers of creed, race, and nationality."<sup>6</sup> Herein lies the peculiar power of the theater as an art; the theater appeals partially to visual sense and thus does not demand an understanding of language. This enables the theater to reach

<sup>1</sup>Charles W. Cooper, Preface to Drama (New York: The Ronald Press Co., 1955), p. 11.

<sup>2</sup>Robert Edmond Jones, The Dramatic Imagination (New York: Theatre Arts Books, 1941), p. 28.

<sup>3</sup>Cheney, loc. cit.

<sup>4</sup>Walter Kerr, "Adventures of the Mind, 20: What Ails the Theater?" The Saturday Evening Post (February 7, 1959), p. 99.

<sup>5</sup>Cheney, op. cit., p. 540.

<sup>6</sup>Whiting, op. cit., p. 6.

beyond the barriers of creed, race, and nationality to present human experiences and human emotions to all people. Theatrical art, therefore, can be said to have a universal appeal because it can convey meaning to all people, regardless of racial or national barriers.

Another aspect of theatrical art lies in its portrayal of man's thought and action throughout history; a play reflects the occurrences and attitudes of the society in which and for which it is written. This places the theater in the artistic realm because ". . . all the arts reflect the mode of their age."<sup>1</sup>

Within the history of the theater can be found an informal history of man's life and thought through the ages, enabling the theater to meet the demands of a final definition of art: "The history of any art is a history of man's states of mind and spirit. . . ."<sup>2</sup>

Based upon the foregoing illustrations of the theater in terms of various definitions of art, the concept of the theatrical art as established for this study can be stated as: the art which presents human experiences as an appeal to the senses through the media of actors and the stage, which reflects the history of man and the development of his thought, and which is based upon the application of the principles of

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<sup>1</sup>Gardner, loc. cit.

<sup>2</sup>Young, loc. cit.

aesthetic thought, skill, taste, and technique.

As an artistic medium, the theater exists within a social environment. The following pages present a concept of the theater in a social context.

### The Theater in a Social Context

". . . What art or what institution has reflected man's soul and mind more thoroughly and more faithfully than the theater?"<sup>1</sup> The concept of the theater as an art has been the subject of the foregoing discussion; but the above statement implies that the theater is more than an art. Theater is classified as an institution that reflects man's soul and mind. The purpose of the following pages is to establish the theater in a social context, as a social institution and as a reflection of the society in which it exists.

To consider the theater in a social context, two basic terms must be defined: the terms "culture" and "society."

"Culture is the continually changing patterns of learned behavior and the products of learned behavior (including attitudes, values, knowledge, and material objects) which are shared and transmitted among the members of society."<sup>2</sup> Culture is ". . . that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief,

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<sup>1</sup>Nicholas Evreinoff, The Theatre in Life, trans. Alexander I. Nazarov (New York: Bretano's, 1927), p. 9.

<sup>2</sup>John F. Cuber, Sociology: A Synopsis of Principles (3d ed.; New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, Inc., 1955), p. 56.

art, morals, law, custom, and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society."<sup>1</sup> Culture is the cumulative creation of man; all of his knowledges, achievements, skills, values, beliefs, and customs are included in the cultural heritages that is passed from generation to generation.

A society is ". . . a group of people who have lived together long enough to become organized and to consider themselves and to be considered as a unit, more or less distinct from other human units."<sup>2</sup> They live together and become organized because they share a common culture. Besides the qualities of having lived together and being an organized group, a society is a group for whom and by whom the transmission of cultural achievement occurs; a society is the organized group of people ". . . who enact a culture."<sup>3</sup>

#### The Theater as a Social Institution

A group of people who are organized into a society and who enact and transmit culture must have some system that aids in the collection, preservation, and transmission of this culture. This is the function of a social institution. A social institution is defined as ". . . an abstract nucleus of values centering around some segment of human life."<sup>4</sup> A Social

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<sup>1</sup>Samuel Koenig, Man and Society (New York: Barnes and Noble, Inc., 1957), p. 43.

<sup>2</sup>Cuber, op. cit., p. 68.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p. 439.

institution is further defined as a vital interest or activity of society which is surrounded by a cluster of mores or folkways.<sup>1</sup>

There are five primary institutions of society;<sup>2</sup> a system of family life, a system of government, a system of economics, a system of religion, and a system of education. There are certain characteristics common to these systems which result in their classification as social institutions. It is the contention of this study that the theater meets these same requirements, and that it can be designated a social institution.

An examination of these qualifying characteristics begins with those that can be isolated from the foregoing definition of a social institution. First, a social institution is a "nucleus of values." The values of a society are reflected in its theater; those things which are deemed important by the members of a society are accorded prominent focus in their plays. The plays of history contain repeated references to current social questions since the theater has served as a forum for examination and discussion of social values. Secondly, a social institution is centered around some segment of human life. This is evident in the instances of family, government, economics, religion, and education. The theater is

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<sup>1</sup>Koenig, op. cit., p. 69.

<sup>2</sup>Cuber, op. cit., p. 452.

centered around an equally vital segment of human life: the aesthetic and intellectual expressions and the recreational needs of society.

A third quality of a social institution is that it provides a method of transmitting the cultural values of a society. Religion perpetrates its own doctrine and ritual; education passes on the accumulated knowledge and skill of a civilization; government and economic systems are transmitted by a continual utilization of their processes; the family is the basis of behavior and value learning. Within the literature of the theater is preserved the heritage of values, ideas, and thought of a society. On the stage, the values of a society are enacted in visible and audible form. Again, it is found that the theater meets a requisite of a social institution: contribution to the transmission of cultural heritage.

A fourth characteristic of a social institution is its eternal character, its indestructibility. There has existed no society which has not had, in one form or another, systems of family life, religion, education, economics, and government. The systems may vary internally, but they are always present. This is true of the theater also; "theatrical performance has been virtually uninterrupted since ancient times."<sup>1</sup> There is an indestructible quality to theatrical art; it continues to survive despite any attempt to destroy it. "No man, nor woman

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<sup>1</sup>Gassner, op. cit., I, xiv.

either, has ever been successful in killing the theatre to the point of making it stay dead."<sup>1</sup> The eternal quality of a social institution is exhibited by the theater; "the theater is . . . essentially eternal."<sup>2</sup>

A final characteristic of a social institution is that it serves the needs of mankind. "A social institution is a vital interest of society that takes on concrete form and is put to work to serve the needs of society."<sup>3</sup> The contention of this study is that the theater serves an educative function for man. There are, however, other needs of man that are served by the theater: religious, social, aesthetic and intellectual, imitative, idealistic, and the need for humor.

The theater originated in the fundamental religious activities of man, in his need to express himself religiously and commune with his Gods. The theater had its ". . . beginnings in the rituals and ceremonies and religious activities of primitive man."<sup>4</sup> Throughout his development, man has correlated the theater with his religious experience. "One cause of drama is certainly to be found in the pursuit of immortality

<sup>1</sup>Clayton Hamilton, The Theory of the Theatre (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1939) foreward by Burns Mantle, p. xv.

<sup>2</sup>Whiting, loc. cit.

<sup>3</sup>Koenig, loc. cit.

<sup>4</sup>Kenneth MacGowan and William Melnitz, The Living Stage (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1955), p. 5.

which has been the devouring passion of man from the beginning."<sup>1</sup>

There is a ". . . dual nature to the impulse underlying dramatic expression; call it divine and human, or religious and social, or spiritual and convivial."<sup>2</sup> In addition to the religious needs of man that are partially fulfilled by the theater, there are social needs that the theater satisfies. Man has created the theater to provide social contact with his fellows. "The theater has always a social function, . . . to unite people in a shared experience."<sup>3</sup>

The theater's service to the aesthetic and intellectual needs of man is expressed by Frank Whiting:

. . . The theatre makes its appeal on two levels, the aesthetic and the intellectual. On the aesthetic level the theatre . . . makes its contribution to the emotional needs of man and to his hunger for the beautiful. On the intellectual level a tremendous proportion of the greatest ideas ever expressed by man have been expressed in dramatic form.<sup>4</sup>

Man's elemental urge to imitate is recognized in the theater. "The pleasure of imitating and watching others imitate has made civilized man write and act plays, and gather in crowds to enjoy the theater."<sup>5</sup> This is the ". . . eternal

<sup>1</sup>"Drama," Encyclopedia Britannica, V (New York: the Americana Corp., 1951), p. 577.

<sup>2</sup>Cheney, op. cit., p. 1.

<sup>3</sup>Nichols, loc. cit., p. 179.

<sup>4</sup>Whiting, loc. cit.

<sup>5</sup>MacGowan and Melnitz, loc. cit.

desire of men to act and watch acting,"<sup>1</sup> a need which is most fully realized through the theatrical medium.

The theater provides an outlet for the human desire to dream, to lose oneself in something other than the mundane actuality of the present.

While the people of a nation are divided on real issues--social, economic, political--they also have one common desire: to lose themselves in a make believe world which represents life as they would like it to be.<sup>2</sup>

Man's need to see his ideals, his dreams, and his wishes portrayed is partially assuaged by theatrical performance. It has been established that the plays and the theater ". . . most profoundly integrated with life are those dedicated to the realization of man's age-long dreams of freedom, individual and social; of justice, which implies every form of equality; and of human brotherhood, which means peace."<sup>3</sup>

Another need of man catered to by the theater is the elemental need for laughter. The theater, primarily through comedy form, ". . . makes its appeal to this universal and timeless human instinct."<sup>4</sup>

Centered around a set of values, providing a way of

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 53.

<sup>2</sup>Anita Block, The Changing World in Plays and Theatre (Boston: Little, Brown, and Co., 1939), p. 418.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 420.

<sup>4</sup>Walley, op. cit., p. 171.

transmitting cultural heritage, possessing an eternal character, and serving basic needs of mankind, the theater meets the qualifications of a social institution. The theater, therefore, can be accorded its place ". . . as an institution among other institutions in a culture."<sup>1</sup>

The establishment of the theater as a social institution, however, does not conclude a discussion of the theater in a social context. Such a discussion must include consideration of the theater as a reflection of the society in which it exists, a veritable mirror of society.

#### The Theater as a Reflection of Society

A mirror is defined as "that which gives a true likeness or image."<sup>2</sup> The theater preserves in its dramatic literature a likeness or image of its contemporary society. The following pages illustrate the concept of the theater as "social mirror" in two ways: by a delineation of the four constant factors of the theatrical institution, each the result of and a reflection of the society in which the theater operates; and by a discussion of the various social factors of any era which influence and are reflected in the theater of that era.

<sup>1</sup>George H. Henry, "Toward a Theatre for Our Time," Educational Theatre Journal, Vol. X, No. 1 (March, 1958), p. 1.

<sup>2</sup>Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary, op. cit., p. 537.

It is society which shapes the theatre, just as in turn the theater shapes society. Every society gets the theater it wants and deserves. The theater can be anything, and will be anything, its society wishes it to be.<sup>1</sup>

There is a reciprocal relationship between the theater and society. The society in which it exists determines the form that the theater will assume in any given period. Conversely, the influence of the theater pervades the society which nurtures it. The theater being that which is desired and demanded by a society, it must reflect the ideals, attitudes, thoughts, beliefs, and mores of that society.

The reflective character of the theater is not static; it is flexible, adjusting to the particular society and age in which it exists. "Life moves and changes, and the theater moves and changes with it."<sup>2</sup> Through the literature of the theater, society possesses a recorded reflection of itself in its various stages of development.

Not only is the mirror-like quality of the theater a flexible one; it is a multi-inclusive one. Almost all aspects of a society are reflected in the theater of that society. "As an imitation of life, the theater eventually embraces almost everything that life embraces. . . ."<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Nichols, loc. cit., p. 180.

<sup>2</sup>Jones, op. cit., p. 45.

<sup>3</sup>Whiting, op. cit., p. 3.

### The Four Theatrical Factors

"A play is a story devised to be presented by actors on a stage before an audience."<sup>1</sup> With this statement, Clayton Hamilton indicates that there are four constant factors of the theatrical institution: the playwright and his play, the stage or playhouse, the actor (s), and the audience. The nature and stature of these four factors vary throughout theatrical history; they are, however, always present. They illustrate the socially reflective character of the theater because the form and/or the nature of the play, the playhouse, the actor, and the audience are direct results of the social environment in which the theater prevails.

The dramatist is the most important figure in the eternal theater, the theater that outlasts one generation only, that goes on from epoch to epoch. . . . He gives the theme; and he creates the theme in terms of life. Of all the parts of a work of art of the theater, his affords the closest and most securely grounded application to life.<sup>2</sup>

The play being the most securely grounded application to life in the theater, it follows that the play closely reflects the life of the period in which the theater is sustained. The plays of history reflect the culture for which they were written. The emotion and poetry of ancient Greece is reflected in the works of Aeschylus, Sophocles, Euripides, and Aristophanes. The consuming interest of Roman society in

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<sup>1</sup>Hamilton, op. cit., p. 3.

<sup>2</sup>Young, op. cit., p. 16.

vulgarity and lavish spectacle was catered to by the Roman playwrights. English expansionism is evident in the plays of the Elizabethan period. Contemporary drama mirrors modern concern with realism and psychological inquiry.

The play, central component of the theatrical institution, mirrors the attitudes and mores of the society for which it is written. The same reflective quality is inherent to the other factors of the theater. The theater has ". . . first the idea or the matter that is to be expressed in this particular medium that we call the art of the theater. This medium in turn consists of a number of other mediums that compose it. . . ." <sup>1</sup> These other media include the playhouse, the actor, and the audience.

The physical theater or the playhouse always has followed the dictates of current society. The Greek theater was the final evolution of the dancing circle; simultaneously, it was incorporated with the temple. The Greek playhouse, therefore, reflected the artistic and religious aspects of Greek culture. The showy magnificence of Roman playhouses was the outgrowth of Roman passion for ostentatious display. The medieval playhouse was the church porch, exhibiting the religious connotation of medieval drama. The basic design of the Elizabethan theater was a modified inn-yard, reflecting the social setting of drama within that period. Modern

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 15.

playhouses, smaller and more intimate, suggest the desire of contemporary society for a revealing examination of motivations and actions.

"The theatre building follows the curve of civilizations."<sup>1</sup> The stages of development of the physical plant, the theatrical playhouse, reflect the values and interests of the society in each period.

"The actor, the human medium by which the drama speaks . . . lends vividness, intensity, and humanity to the art."<sup>2</sup> The actor, therefore, must be deemed an essential element of the theatrical institution. Throughout dramatic history, the attitudes of current social thought have been reflected in the style and status of the acting profession.

Acting style has concurred with the demands of society. Bombastic oratory or intimate realism has been adopted as technique and approach by the actor in response to the dictates of social values and the demands of the audience.

The status of the actor also has reflected social climate. The Greeks, aesthetically interested in the acts and vitally concerned with the acquisition of knowledge, accorded the actor an honored and privileged social status as a medium for imparting this coveted art and wisdom. The Romans, unconcerned with art and wisdom per se, relegated the actor to

<sup>1</sup>Cheney, op. cit., p. 3.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

the lowest social strata. The actors in early medieval theater were priests, reflecting the correlation of the church and the theater. The actor has been honored by governments and monarchs, and he has been shunned by society collectively; the actor has been called into service by the church, and he has been alternately excommunicated; the actor has been servant to the dieties and mentor of manners, and he has been panderer to man's grossest appetites.<sup>1</sup>

The fourth constant of the theatrical entity, perhaps most clearly reflecting the social conditions and values of the times, is the audience whose capricious favor the ". . . theatre inevitably attempts to please."<sup>2</sup> The ". . . natural demands of an assembled audience"<sup>3</sup> dictate the form the play will take, the style and status of the actor, and the construction of the playhouse.

The audience can be considered an ". . . index to the prevailing tastes. . ."<sup>4</sup> of a society. The dramatist writes to appeal to the conscious or unconscious demands of the audience of his times, portraying on the stage the ". . . themes, thoughts, emotions, circumscribed by the limits of popular appreciation."<sup>5</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Ibid.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 6.

<sup>3</sup>Hamilton, op. cit., p. 13.

<sup>4</sup>Walley, op. cit., p. 42.

<sup>5</sup>Hamilton, op. cit., p. 9.

If the dramatist holds ideas of religion, or of politics, or of social theory, that are in advance of his time, he must keep them to himself or else his plays will fail. . . . The great successful dramatists, like Moliere and Shakespeare. . . their views of religion, of morality, of politics, of law, have been views of the populace.<sup>1</sup>

The successful playwright conforms to that function of the theater which is to ". . . sum up and present dramatically all that the crowd has been thinking for some time concerning any subject of importance."<sup>2</sup>

The theatrical institution is established in a social context by a consideration of the component elements of the theater: the play, the playhouse, the actor, and the audience. Each reflects or mirrors the times in which the theater exists, the attitudes and values of the current social environment.

#### Social Forces Influencing the Theater

"Vital drama must be integrated with its age."<sup>3</sup> The integration of drama with its age is illustrated by the social forces which influence the theater and determine its form: current historical events, aesthetic values, intellectual criteria, artistic and literary standards, religious beliefs, and social conditions.

"Drama is an art not only of expression but of

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 25.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 26.

<sup>3</sup>Block, op. cit., p. 412.

successful communication."<sup>1</sup> The theater communicates current national achievement and chronicles historical events. The English spirit of expansionism in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries is reflected in the patriotic fervor of the drama of the period. The historical advent of the Renaissance is recorded in dramatic history by a rebirth of interest in the ancient classic plays. "The story of the nineteenth century theater in the United States is . . . the story of the country itself,"<sup>2</sup> reflecting the pioneering and commercial interests of the young nation. Influenced as it has been by current events, the theater always has been oriented historically.

"In any given period, both playhouse and play are products of the . . . aesthetic values of their times."<sup>3</sup> The aesthetic standards of a particular age are reflected in the drama of that age. The ancient Greek theater illustrates the application of aesthetic interests of society to stage presentation. The Greek theater also serves to illustrate the concern with intellectual pursuits in Greek society. Greek playwrights expounded philosophy and explored thought within the framework of their plays.

Theatrical enterprises reflect the artistic and

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<sup>1</sup>Walley, op. cit., p. 8.

<sup>2</sup>MacGowan and Melnitz, op. cit., p. 369.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. vii.

literary standards of any given period. The theater is a ". . . synthesis of many arts and many skills."<sup>1</sup> As such, it employs artistic expression in stage de'cor; the designer's skill and technique is commensurate with the artistic standards of the era. The playwright's scope is somewhat limited by the literary technique, style, and level of attainment of his age. The flowering of romantic literature, lyric and heroic, permitted the advent of nineteenth century romantic playwrights like Edmond Rostand. Sinclair Lewis, Ernest Hemingway, F. Scott Fitzgerald, and their contemporaries paved the way for social criticism by twentieth century American playwrights like Eugene O'Neill, Maxwell Anderson, and Arthur Miller. Within the stage design and playwrighting of a given theatrical period are reflected the artistic and literary standards of that era.

"Greek drama in its origin was a ritual performed for a religious purpose."<sup>2</sup> From the earliest Greek theatrical performance to the 1959 production of Archibald MacLeish's J. B., there has existed a correlation between drama and religion. The religious thought and experience of each historical period has been explored and presented in the drama of the respective period.

As a reflection of social values and conditions, "the

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 439.

<sup>2</sup>Encyclopedia Britannica, op. cit., V, 581.

drama has mirrored the life, customs, manners and general living habits of the people . . ."<sup>1</sup> throughout recorded history. Hendrik Ibsen in A Doll's House, for example, presented ". . . a woman in revolt against the accepted social code of her time . . . showing such a woman in the actual process of evolution."<sup>2</sup> Modern drama presents social conditions as subjects of conflict, such subjects as ". . . the race problem, the labor union problem, the Fascist menace, the question of war."<sup>3</sup>

The social forces existing in a society influence the theater and thereby place the theater in a social context. "Every epoch, every period of our cultural development has reflected in the theatre, as in a mirror, its fondest thoughts, dreams and ideals, has used the stage as a tribune from which to proclaim new, or old, social, religious, and moral theories."<sup>4</sup>

#### Summary

The foregoing pages have presented a concept of the theater in a social context. The theater was first defended as a social institution. The second consideration was of the theater as a reflection of the society in which it exists. The four major components of the art of the theater are the

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<sup>1</sup>"Drama," World Book Encyclopedia, IV (Chicago: The Quarrie Corporation, 1949), p. 2078.

<sup>2</sup>Block, op. cit., p. 26.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 195.

<sup>4</sup>Evreinoff, op. cit., p. 8.

play, the playhouse, the actor, and the audience; these factors of the theatrical entity are an immediate outgrowth of and an abiding reflection of the society by which the theater is surrounded. The theater also reflects its social environment as social and cultural forces influence the theatrical institution within the framework of its contemporary society: current historical events, aesthetic values, intellectual criteria, artistic and literary standards, religious beliefs, and social conditions.

As a social institution transmitting cultural heritage, the theater possesses qualities that enable it to become an educative force in society.

### The Theater as an Educative Force

This study is designed to establish the educational role of the theater as its justification for existence. Specific examples of the theater's educational influence will be discussed in later chapters. The present concern is to place the theater generally within the realm of education, to justify its fundamental designation as an educational medium, by a consideration of the educational qualities of the theater, the educational scope of the theater, and the theater as an educational force active in furthering international understanding.

### Educational Qualities of the Theater

Education, as defined in the orientation to the present study, is the acquisition of the art of the utilization of

knowledge. The educated individual is the man who has acquired the art of using accumulated knowledge; without this art, facts and information are static and have little worth in the educative process. The theater can and does contribute to this acquisitive process, to the development of the art of using knowledge.

Education is the ". . . organized effort of society to enrich and develop and consolidate itself by conserving and developing and teaching all that can be known of the inner and the outer worlds."<sup>1</sup> The inner or personal world of man is enriched by education defined as the ". . . continual process resulting in the socialization of a person."<sup>2</sup> An individual is considered to be socialized when he has been taught the beliefs, attitudes, and mores of a society; when he has incorporated them into his personality; and when he manifests them in interaction with his fellows. The theater in its social context, is a spokesman for the social norms of a society; the theater illustrates the mores, attitudes, and beliefs of a culture. This quality of social consciousness permits the inclusion of the theater in the educational process of socialization, the development of the inner world of the individual. The outer world of man is enriched by education defined as ". . . the instrument for extending culture."<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Nichols, loc. cit., p. 179.

<sup>2</sup>Cuber, op. cit., p. 521.

<sup>3</sup>Felix Payant, "The Social Background of American Art," Art in American Life and Education, Fortieth Yearbook

The theater reflects the folkways and mores of a culture, thereby contributing to the educational process of extending culture or cultivating the outer world of the individual. The theater, therefore, is an educational force in that it exposes, analyzes, and interprets the inner and the outer worlds of the individual.

The educational impact of the theater is enhanced by the fact of the theater presenting information in a relative form. Isolated facts are not distributed to the theatrical audience; rather, information is presented within a frame of reference, in the context of a life-situation. The theater is "... a place man contrives so that we may see ourselves in all kinds of imagined experiences and so derive emotional and intellectual experiences which will . . . deepen our understanding of ourselves and our society."<sup>1</sup> Educational values and learning experiences accrue to theatrical presentations of life-like situations and activities.

Educational theory states that "acquiring concepts may be regarded as a higher function of assimilating many sense perceptions."<sup>2</sup> Based upon sense perceptions adherent to the theatrical experience, the sights and sounds perceived from a stage presentation, the spectator is exposed to larger

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of the National Society for the Study of Education (Bloomington, Illinois: Public School Publishing Company, 1941), p. 29.

<sup>1</sup>Nichols, loc. cit.

<sup>2</sup>James S. Kinder and F. Dean McClusky (ed.), The Audio-Visual Reader (Dubuque, Iowa: William C. Brown Co., 1954), p. 21.

concepts. "We see, through this mirror of the theater, . . . thus extending our lives and our knowledge of life."<sup>1</sup> The theater is educational in that it presents sense perceptions which result in the acquisition of concepts of life.

"In its essence the art of the theatre rests on a common foundation with all learning: on man's capacity to explore, wonder and reflect."<sup>2</sup> The theatrical institution stimulates and records the explorative, wondering, and reflective thought of each successive society. The theater, therefore, contributes to a comprehensive education.

Education must strive for a ". . . balance between science and material things on one hand and art and philosophy on the other. Good theatre is one of the paths leading toward such a goal."<sup>3</sup> The theater makes its artistic and philosophic appeal in terms of a liberal arts education. The liberal arts education is designed ". . . for thought and for aesthetic appreciation. It proceeds by imparting a knowledge of the masterpieces of thought, of imaginative literature, and of art."<sup>4</sup> The theater preserves the finest philosophic and illuminating thought, literature, and artistic achievement of each era. The theater, therefore, provides the balancing elements of the liberal arts education.

<sup>1</sup>Nichols, loc. cit.

<sup>2</sup>Whiting, op. cit., p. 3.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 291.

<sup>4</sup>Whithead, op. cit., p. 55.

To summarize, the theater aids man in the acquisition of the art of using knowledge because it transmits social and cultural heritage, because it presents information in relative form, because it enlarges concepts through sense perception, and because it capitalizes on man's interest in exploration and reflection to provide a liberal arts education. "The theatre is a school"<sup>1</sup> in which men like ". . . Moliere and Shakespeare . . . wrote plays . . . and became teachers."<sup>2</sup> It can be stated, therefore, that ". . . the role of our theatre is educational . . . in a wide, philosophic sense of the word."<sup>3</sup>

#### Educational Scope of the Theater

The theater has functioned as an educative force in each period of history. The educational value of the theater within a given society evolves from the fact that the theater can ". . . integrate audiences with the age in which they live."<sup>4</sup> It is ". . . the highest function of the theatre to present to audiences plays which endeavor to clarify and illumine some aspect of import and meaning to their common lives."<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Jones, op. cit., p. 23.

<sup>2</sup>Hamilton, op. cit., p. 31.

<sup>3</sup>Evreinoff, op. cit., p. 13.

<sup>4</sup>Block, op. cit., p. 8.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., p. 9.

The theater deals with matters that are essential and topical in the lives of people existing in any specific historical period. "A vital theatre, in any epoch, calls for plays which furnish commentary, interpretation, illumination and criticism of that epoch."<sup>1</sup> The educational impact of the theatrical institution upon the society and within the chronological period in which it exists is discussed in detail in Chapter III. This chapter enumerates the educational influences of the theater in the religious, social, and intellectual and cultural realms of life.

The educational scope of the theater, however, is not limited to the specific society in which the theater exists. Men living in any one age derive value from a study of the past. "Stability, humility, and wisdom may be gained by a knowledge of the past. . . ."<sup>2</sup> Herein lies contemporary man's educational benefit from a study of the history of the theater.

No civilization is ever the result of the accomplishments of just one generation. A civilization represents the cumulative achievements of preceding ages. "It is his tremendous inheritance from the past that provides the knowledge and skills that have made man the lord of creation."<sup>3</sup> Through a study of dramatic history, men gain an understanding

<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 7.

<sup>2</sup>Whiting, op. cit., p. 5.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid.

of and an appreciation for the cultural heritage preserved and transmitted by the theater.

The play script, like other literary forms, provides an enduring link with the past. Another source of knowledge of the theatrical heritage is live performances of the classic dramas which provide ". . . a sense of historic continuity not only of the theatre but of life itself."<sup>1</sup> This sense of historic continuity, the heritage contained within theatrical history, is an educative force operating in today's modern world. This subject is discussed in detail in Chapter IV.

In summary, the theater's educational scope is twofold: it provides learning experiences for the members of its concurrent society, and it reminds modern man of his inheritance from the past.

#### The Theater Educating for International Understanding

"The function of education is one of creating, clarifying, and transmitting experience. Thus, education attempts to guide the student to a more realistic understanding of the world."<sup>2</sup> This statement of educational principles indicates the educative role assumed by the theater in increasing international understanding.

<sup>1</sup>Block, op. cit., p. 13.

<sup>2</sup>Kinder and McClusky, op. cit., p. 21.

International understanding is the formation of rapport between peoples based upon comprehension by individuals of the factors inherent in the historical, social, cultural, and personal natures of members of the world community. The theater clarifies these areas of human behavior in the light of universal behavior, guiding the student to that realistic understanding of the world which is one of the goals of education.

The function of the theater in international relations is one of interpretation of peoples; theatrical ventures of all countries serve as a medium of interpretation to peoples of other countries.

A dramatic or comic tale, laid in some foreign country is educational in so far as it shows the manners, customs and environment of the people. . . . Under the cloak of entertainment, the theater has tutored the American public with respect to mores, manners and customs. It has also carried its messages to all lands.<sup>1</sup>

The furthering of international understanding is the function of the theater as an art because ". . . the arts serve primarily as a medium of spiritual communication, helping to create the ties of human brotherhood."<sup>2</sup> The theater as ". . . a living link between living people,"<sup>3</sup> as a power for furthering mutual understanding, is discussed in detail in Chapter VI.

<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 104.

<sup>2</sup>Mortimer J. Adler (ed.), The Great Ideas, Vol. I (Chicago: Encyclopedia Britannica Inc., 1952), p. 71.

<sup>3</sup>Rosamond Gilder, "Ten Years of ITI," Educational Theatre Journal, Vol. XI, No. 1 (March, 1959), p. 1.

The theater possesses educational qualities which enable it to teach members of the society in which the theater exists, to teach contemporary peoples the heritage of their past, and to teach international understanding. Therefore, "the theater . . . is a tremendous educative force."<sup>1</sup>

### Summary

Chapter II has presented a definitive view of the theater in an attempt to establish a concrete concept of the theatrical entity. The theater was discussed first as an art, the discussion culminating in the definition of theatrical art as that art which presents human experiences as an appeal to the senses through the media of actors and the stage, which reflects the history of man and the development of his thought, and which is based upon the application of the principles of aesthetic thought, skill, taste, and technique.

The second consideration was of the theater in its social context. The theater was defended as a social institution as it adheres to the characteristics of a social institution. The concept of the theater as a reflection of its contemporary society was presented: the factors of the theatrical entity and the social influences on the theater were discussed as mirroring the era in which the theater exists.

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<sup>1</sup>Nichols, loc. cit., p. 180.

The theater as an educative force was the final consideration of the chapter. The educational qualities of the theater were reviewed as they enable the theater to become a medium for educating the peoples of the historical periods in which the theater exists, educating contemporary peoples in regard to their heritage from the past, and ultimately educating for international understanding.

Theater, society, and education were thus demonstrated to be closely inter-related, nourishing each other as they form three great branches of the tree of Man.

Chapter III investigates the specific areas in which the educational impact of the theatrical institution is evident.

## CHAPTER III

### SELECTED HISTORICAL ILLUSTRATIONS OF THE EDUCATIONAL INFLUENCE OF THE THEATER

#### Introduction

Harley Granville-Barker introduced The Exemplary Theatre with the statement: "This book is a plea for the recognition of the theatre as an educational force."<sup>1</sup> Chapter III of this study constitutes a parallel plea; illustrations from theatrical history are presented in an attempt to defend the concept of the theater as an educational force.

According to George Henry, three elements comprise the theatrical entity: its technical or production element; its dramatic element; and its educative element, ". . . through which the theatre itself can be renewed, reach universality, and endure as an influence."<sup>2</sup> The purpose of Chapter III is to investigate the educative element, the enduring influence of the theater as an educative force.

The discussion in Chapter II of the theater in a social context established that "the theatre is closely connected with the social, political and religious life of people,

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<sup>1</sup>Harley Granville-Barker, The Exemplary Theatre (London: Chatto and Windus, 1922), p. 1.

<sup>2</sup>Henry, loc. cit., p. 1.

and is a potent factor in the moral and cultural progress of humanity."<sup>1</sup> This close connection enables the theater to exert educational influence in the following areas: development and interpretation of religious thought, establishment and support of social thought and custom, and enrichment of cultural and intellectual climate. This chapter presents the theater's educational contributions in these three areas by the delineation of specific illustrations from dramatic history. The examples used are selective rather than comprehensive; they form an arbitrary compilation of the most pertinent and most representative illustrations.

To establish a frame of reference for the educational illustrations itemized in this chapter, a brief over-view of the periods of dramatic history and the major theatrical events within each respective period follows.

### Chronological Summary of Dramatic History

#### Pre-Classic Drama

Primitive dramatic expression was an outgrowth of man's inherent desire to communicate the events of his day-to-day existence to his fellows. This basic desire united with the need to release his imaginative processes to inaugurate creative dance as an integral phase of primitive life.

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<sup>1</sup>Theodore Komisarjevsky, The Theatre (London: John Lane the Bodley Head, 1935), p. ix.

From the dance evolved the rudimentary forms of imitative and expressive action which are the foundations of dramatic art. The first dramatic performance per se was recorded in Egypt in 4000 B.C.<sup>1</sup> Egyptian drama revolved around the myths and ritual of the culture. The dramatic tendency was elevated to the theatrical art form when it crossed the Mediterranean to Greece in the sixth century B.C.

### Greek Drama

The Greek civilization was characterized by a flowering of the arts, an advanced cultural and intellectual level, a profound concern with the spiritual nature of man and his place in the universe, and a penetrating aesthetic and philosophic consciousness. "The theater provided an almost perfect medium of expression for this surging spirit of Greece."<sup>2</sup> The theater was a vital experience that was shared by the entire community. Athens, with the Theater of Dionysus at the foot of the Acropolis, was the center of Greek dramatic activity. The annual Dionysian festivals were the summit of religious experience and the pinnacle of theatrical achievement. Greek drama reached a peak in the fifth century B.C. with the tragedies of Aeschylus, Sophocles, and Euripides, and the comedies of Aristophanes. During the fourth and third centuries B.C. Greek drama consisted of revived performances

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<sup>1</sup>George Freedley and John A. Reeves, A History of the Theatre (New York: Crown Publishers, 1941), p. 2.

<sup>2</sup>Whiting, op. cit., p. 13.

of the works of these master and lesser imitations of their writings.

### Roman Drama

Roman drama was relegated to the province of the lower classes and the slaves. After the Roman Empire conquered the Greek city-states, Roman drama consisted of adaptations and translations of the Greek plays. During the third and second centuries B.C., these plays were enjoyed by the noble patricians and the military tribunes. Original Roman drama of merit was written by Plautus, Terrence, and Seneca. Disregard for the aesthetic and intellectual qualities of the Greek theater and a desire for spectacle and vulgarity eventually reduced Roman drama to lavish and licentious entertainment. The gory spectacle of the Circus Maximus flourished until the final collapse of the Roman Empire in 476 A.D.

### Medieval Drama

From the death of Seneca in 65 A.D. to 1000 A.D., the professional theater lay dormant. The theatrical flame was fed only by mimes, strolling minstrels, and troubadours. The Middle Ages, dating from the eleventh century through the sixteenth century, saw the rebirth of an active theater. In the tenth century<sup>1</sup> a four-line playlet portraying the Resurrection was introduced into the Easter service of the

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 26.

Christian Church, the same Church which had denounced the theater as immoral five centuries before. Playlets were subsequently absorbed into Church services on other Holy Days. Eventually, full-length plays were performed on the Church porch by members of the clergy and laymen. As they increased in popularity, the plays were secularized and removed from the direct auspices of the Church, finally being sponsored by the Trade Guilds.

### The Drama of the Renaissance

The Renaissance, popularly termed a "rebirth of learning," was a renewed awareness of the aesthetic and artistic standards of the ancient classics. Originating in fourteenth century Italy with the writing of Dante's The Divine Comedy as the high point in the development of literature, the awakened interest in and imitation of the masters of the past and the forms they established spread throughout the Continent. Italy's contributions to the theater during the Renaissance were in the realms of opera, pastorals, a few comedies, revivals of the Greek and Roman classic plays, and the evolution of the commedia dell'arte form. The theater in the Spanish Renaissance was led by Lope de Vega and Calderón. The classic influence of the Renaissance was first expressed in France in 1552 with Étienne Jodelle's play, Cléopâtre Captive. The spirit of the Renaissance was continued in the French theater by the neo-classicists Pierre Corneille, Jean Racine, and Moliere (Jean-Baptiste Poquelin).

English adoption of classic technique was first evident in 1553 with Ralph Roister Doister, a comedy modeled after Plautus; the first serious drama reflecting the Renaissance attitude was Gorboduc, 1561. The Renaissance in England eventually triumphed over the religious influence of the medieval drama and culminated in the Elizabethan period, 1580-1642. Elizabethan playwrights included John Lyly, Thomas Kyd, Robert Greene, Christopher Marlowe, William Shakespeare, Ben Jonson, and John Webster. The Elizabethan period ended in 1642 when Puritan influence caused Parliament to close the theaters.

#### Restoration and Eighteenth Century Drama

The theaters were re-opened in 1660 with the ascension of Charles II to the throne of England. The Restoration period and the early 1770's were characterized by imitations of the French comedies of manners (resulting in part from royal interest in the theater of France). These comedies were played to small, select, sophisticated audiences of aristocrats. Playwrights included William Wycherley, Sir George Etherege, and William Congreve. Oliver Goldsmith and Richard Brinsley Sheridan began writing in the late 1700's. The eighteenth century in Germany was characterized by the romanticist writings of Gotthold Lessing, Johann von Goethe, and Johann von Schiller.

## The Drama of the Nineteenth Century

The last quarter of the nineteenth century began the period of what is termed "modern drama," exhibiting a primary interest in the forms of naturalism and realism. Norway's Hendrik Ibsen, the father of modern drama, was the first to use the life of the common man as material for the theater.<sup>1</sup> August Strindberg in Sweden reached the peak of naturalism with his expressionistic dramas.<sup>2</sup> George Bernard Shaw was the outstanding nineteenth century writer in England; Anton Chekov in Russia; Henri Becque, Eugene Brieux, and Emile Zola in France.

## Twentieth Century Drama

"The American theatre was the last theatre of major proportions to come of age."<sup>3</sup> The twentieth century theater has been dominated by the varied American forms of sociological and psychological drama attempting to interpret the true life of man. Outstanding twentieth century dramatists include Eugene O'Neill, Maxwell Anderson, Clifford Odets, Lillian Hellman, Thornton Wilder, William Saroyan, Tennessee Williams, William Inge, and Arthur Miller.

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 63.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 67.

<sup>3</sup>Gassner, op. cit., I, 770.

The foregoing chronological summary of the history of the drama creates a frame of reference for the presentation of specific illustrations of the theater as an educative force. The first consideration is of the theater as an educative force in the realm of religious thought.

The Theater: An Educative Force Developing  
and Interpreting Religious Thought

Introduction

In discussing the myriad influences of the theater on the society in which it exists, Ramsden Balmforth correlates the theater with religion thus: "There has always been an intimate connection and relation, although sometimes obscure, between religion and the drama."<sup>1</sup>

The first evidences of the dramatic instinct are found in the societies of primitive man. Primitive man ". . . danced for pleasure and for ritual. He spoke in dance to the gods, he prayed in dance, and gave thanks in dance. By no means all this activity was dramatic or theatric; but in his designed movement was the germ of drama and of theatre."<sup>2</sup> Western theater began in the myth-and-ritualistic ceremonies of ancient Egypt. They contained verses spoken by priests and were presented on formal sacred occasions. The subject matter of these

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<sup>1</sup>Ramsden Balmforth, The Ethical and Religious Value of the Drama (New York: Adelphi Company, 1926), p.11.

<sup>2</sup>Cheney, op. cit., p. 11.

earliest dramas dealt with the myths of Osiris, the god of the sun, of life, and of the human soul.<sup>1</sup>

The inception of drama had a religious connotation; religious thought, doctrine, and teaching has been integrated with the development of the theater throughout history. This inter-relationship has existed because ". . . the subject-matter of both Religion and the Drama is the same -- the conflict of the soul of man with himself, that is, with his hereditary tendencies, and with nature, environment, destiny, and all that these imply."<sup>2</sup>

"It is significant that the classical and native strains which united to make the drama we know today originated in seasonal rites of resurrection, one of Dionysus and the other of Jesus."<sup>3</sup> The theaters of ancient Greece and of the Middle Ages are the most pronouncedly illustrative of the theater as an educative force developing and interpreting religious thought of a society.

#### The Greek Theater and Religious Instruction

The dramatic myth-rituals of Egypt spread to Greece where "the ancestral tomb, the magic circle, and the temple became the theatre."<sup>4</sup> Drama in Greece was inextricably bound with religious teachings and religious observance.

<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 22.

<sup>2</sup>Balmforth, op. cit., p. 142.

<sup>3</sup>Samuel Selden, Man in His Theatre (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1957), p. 25.

<sup>4</sup>Gassner, op. cit., I, 2.

A consideration of the nature of Greek religion reveals the characteristics that encouraged the development of theatrical art as an integral part of religious thought in the Greek civilization.

A lived and companionable religion, inspirational but seldom rule-making, was at the base of Greek life. It was a religion not of conformance but of celebration. It left man free to create, himself god-like. Necessarily man and his activities must be beautiful. Exercise of the artist's creativeness in architecture and sculpture, in the service of the gods; dramatic ritual, dancing and full theatre production; games and procession; all these rose from spiritual and devotional sources in the hearts of the people. The drama from its beginnings . . . was intertwined with religion, a part of sacred ceremonial.<sup>1</sup>

The theater was of vital importance in Greek life because it was the climax of this religious ceremonial. "The two annual occasions particularly distinguished by the performance of drama were religious festivals in honor of Dionysus."<sup>2</sup> Dionysus, the Greek god of the vineyards, of fertility, and of mystical inspiration, became the patron god of the drama. The annual Dionysian festivals were climaxed with the Dithyramb, competitive productions combining dramatic odes, song, and dance. These festivals evolved into the dramatic contests through which "Greece was the cradle of the two civilized and civilizing arts of tragedy and comedy. It was on the Greek peninsula that they emerged out of ritual into art."<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Cheney, op. cit., pp. 30-31.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 3.

<sup>3</sup>Gassner, loc. cit.

To review, the Greek theater and the classic forms of comedy and tragedy came into existence as ". . . a religious and cultural function of ancient Greek community life."<sup>1</sup> In Greece ". . . theatre production and theatre going were a form of religious exercise."<sup>2</sup> The concept of the Greek theater as a religious exercise, and consequently as religious instruction, is predicated on the subject matter of Greek drama.

In its early days the Greek theater was devoted exclusively to mythology, to the presentation of the legends and myths surrounding the gods and goddesses worshipped in Greek society. The theater was, therefore, an ever-constant reminder of the foundations and beliefs of the Greek religion.

As time went on, the dramas continued to deal with Dionysus, but ". . . graver ideas for which the god stood were separated from the license and gaiety which he also personified; the latter furnished the material for comedy, the former for tragedy."<sup>3</sup> Comedy was, therefore, partially divorced from serious religious concerns, and the major burden of religious instruction fell on the tragic form.

The first great playwright of Greek tragedy was Aeschylus, ". . . a mystic and a moralist . . . who gravitated instinctively to the most religious literary activity of his time -- the drama."<sup>4</sup> In The Orestia, the only extant trilogy

<sup>1</sup>Walley, op. cit., p. 63.

<sup>2</sup>Cheney, op. cit., p. 55.

<sup>3</sup>Story of the Drama, Vol. VII of The Delphian Course (Hammond, Indiana: W. B. Conkey Company, 1913), p. 3.

<sup>4</sup>Gassner, op. cit., I, 9.

by Aeschylus, the classic tragic pattern is presented. "His themes were traditional and deeply religious."<sup>1</sup>

Aeschylus' major theme was that of man seeking answers, attempting to clarify within himself the "why" of his existence, and realizing the healing wisdom acquired through human suffering. "On the tragic stage the chief figure is always struggling with other persons, with the laws of life, with the institutions of society, with the Gods, with Fate, with warring elements in his own nature."<sup>2</sup>

Through his tragedies Aeschylus developed and interpreted the prevalent religious beliefs of his day: man is in the hands of the fates; his guilt is perpetuated; he must assume a certain measure of personal responsibility.

Sophocles, the second of the Greek tragic triumvirate, emphasized the need of moderation in the spiritual as well as the practical aspects of life. Oedipus Rex presents a man ". . . nobly moderate in pursuing the facts of his case, and wrongly immoderate in finding himself when he discovers them."<sup>3</sup> Each of Sophocles' tragedies is precipitated by excessiveness and lack of reason on the part of the protagonist. He advanced the doctrine that "reason must rule man's course in life."<sup>4</sup> In the Oedipus tragedy, "an unmistakable magnificence

<sup>1</sup>MacGowan and Melnitz, op. cit., p. 48.

<sup>2</sup>Story of the Drama, Vol. VII of The Delphian Course, loc. cit.

<sup>3</sup>Gassner, op. cit., I, 31.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid.

lights him down his dark path, and through him the entire race of men is dignified."<sup>1</sup> Sophocles, therefore, inculcated moderation and reason into the religious significance of his plays, thereby interpreting for his audiences a way to reach a more satisfactory religious awareness: through the cultivation of reason and the incorporation of moderation within the individual.

Euripides introduced a new concept into the religious thinking of his Greek audiences; he developed, encouraged, and interpreted a new sense of skepticism. He protested, through the medium of the theater, the unquestioning prostration of man before fate and the blind glorification of the gods which were then prevalent. He interpreted the gods as both good and bad; this demanded a degree of human reliance and independence from the gods, a proportion of human control of destiny.<sup>2</sup>

The following comment by Balmforth summarizes the religious instruction implied in the Greek tragedies:

The great Greek dramatists, Aeschylus, Sophocles, and Euripides, like the Greek philosophers, seemed to be trying to bring into the minds of their hearers and readers a juster, more humane conception of the Supreme spirit than that which had hitherto existed.<sup>3</sup>

The Greek theater developed and interpreted contemporary religious thought in that as an institution it was  
 ". . . purgative, corrective, interpretive -- in sum, educative."<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 32.

<sup>2</sup>Cheney, op. cit., p. 55.

<sup>3</sup>Balmforth, op. cit., p. 78.

<sup>4</sup>Henry, loc. cit., p. 1.

If the Roman theater ever had the religious significance of the Greek, it lost this very quickly, becoming merely "show business".<sup>1</sup> The theater's function as religious instruction was temporarily halted, as was the existence of the legitimate theater per se, until the advent of the Middle Ages.

### The Medieval Theater and Religious Instruction

One force in the development of the Western theater came from the Dionysian festivals of ancient Greece; ". . . a second sprang out of the Easter rites of the Christian Church."<sup>2</sup>

The first use of the dramatic medium in the medieval church services was the previously mentioned four-line playlet which was introduced in the tenth century to supplement the Easter service. Later in the same century, the Bishop of Winchester in England wrote a text of the Easter mass for enactment. In France in 990, The Feast of Fools was ". . . the first expression of the dramatic element in the bosom of the church."<sup>3</sup>

Liturgical drama, sponsored by the Medieval Church, began in the tenth century with the events cited above and with responsive passages in the chanted church service. It increased during the eleventh and twelfth centuries, and by the fourteenth century had become a stereotyped form. "This

<sup>1</sup>MacGowan and Melnitz, op. cit., p. 28.

<sup>2</sup>Selden, op. cit., p. 23.

<sup>3</sup>Charles Hastings, The Theatre (London: Duckworth and Co., 1901), p. 96.

marked a new beginning of the drama in Western Europe and the British Isles, again from religious roots, this time Christian and more dimly pagan."<sup>1</sup> Liturgical drama was acted by the clergy within the church building as a form of religious instruction:

Realizing the tremendous hold the dramatic instinct had on all its people, the medieval Church translated its religious history and dogma into a theatre form which would appeal to its communicants and so strengthen its hold on their consciences as well as their emotions.<sup>2</sup>

From liturgical drama was developed semi-liturgical drama in the twelfth century as the dramatization of Biblical scenes was moved from the altar to the church porch.<sup>3</sup> Laymen as well as priests began acting in semi-liturgical drama; the purpose, however, remained the same: ". . . to provide a kind of visual aid in the religious instruction of unlettered minds."<sup>4</sup>

The final form of medieval drama was the passion play, thematically religious but performed exclusively by laymen. Sponsored by local confraternities, composed primarily of Trade Guild members, the passion play continued until the mid-1500's.

Involving a group of people ". . . displaying dramatic art as an act of communion,"<sup>5</sup> the religious drama of the Middle

<sup>1</sup>Cooper, op. cit., p. 127.

<sup>2</sup>Freedley and Reeves, op. cit., p. 62.

<sup>3</sup>Cooper, loc. cit.

<sup>4</sup>Walley, op. cit., p. 50.

<sup>5</sup>Gassner, op. cit., I, 186.

Ages served the cause of Christian ideals.<sup>1</sup> Eventually the plays became less ponderous as "humor was introduced in order to make the lesson more attractive."<sup>2</sup>

The lesson or religious instruction of medieval drama was conveyed through the mystery, morality, and miracle plays. The first medieval play form was the mystery play, portraying the stories of the Old Testament and emphasizing the creation legend. Morality plays were developed to present and interpret moral values; these plays vitalized the opposition of the forces of good and evil. Morality plays, as illustrated by Everyman, demonstrated the value of virtuous personal living as prescribed by the ethical and moral concepts of the Christian Church. The miracle plays enacted the lives of the saints.

The drama of the Middle Ages provided both a pulpit and a classroom through which the Church educated its people, perpetuated its doctrine, and increased its influence.

### The Theater and Religious Instruction

#### After the Medieval Period

A new era in religious thinking was inaugurated by the Renaissance which, therefore, ushered in a new concept of the theater as an educative force developing and interpreting religious thought:

<sup>1</sup>Komisarjevsky, op. cit., p. 8.

<sup>2</sup>Gassner, op. cit., I, 188.

The Renaissance . . . put an end to conceiving man as predestined victim of the gods of classical antiquity, or as a pawn in the cosmic conflict between the heaven and hell of medieval drama. Humanism triumphed; man himself was the center of all things; and the stage picture of him changed accordingly. The renewed spirit of inquiry and exploration made itself felt in the theatre.<sup>1</sup>

The acceptance of humanistic philosophy caused the concepts of man taught by the religious drama of the Greek and Medieval periods to be discarded. With the exception of isolated remnants of medieval drama,<sup>2</sup> the theater since the Middle Ages has advocated the doctrine of man himself as the chief factor in the control of his destiny.

Since the advent of the Renaissance and the subsequent decline of medieval morality plays, the theater has presented religious instruction indirectly. Although the legitimate theater has been divorced from the direct auspices of the Church, plays have continued to express and interpret the theological and moral precepts with which society is concerned.

Religious instruction in the theater, from the Renaissance to the modern drama, has been implied in plays concerned with ethics and values of human behavior. "No education can be regarded as complete or effective which fails to give primary place to character aims and to definite inculcation of moral principles."<sup>3</sup> The theater contributes

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<sup>1</sup>The Encyclopedia Americana, VII (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1946), 309.

<sup>2</sup>The Passion Play at Oberammergau, Germany, was first performed in 1662 and is still presented annually.

<sup>3</sup>Clyde Lemond Hay, The Blind Spot in American Public Education (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1950), p. 89.

to this facet of education, teaching the same moral principles indirectly through its drama that the Church preaches directly from its pulpits.

Man's downfall as the result of greeds, lusts, and similar character flaws was the theme of Shakespeare's tragedies. This same theme, man's character as it effects the course of his life, has continued to provide the subject matter of drama and is presented in such modern plays as Arthur Miller's The Death of a Salesman. Contemporary plays like MacLeish's J.B. are more specific in their concern with religious concepts as they explore man's relationship to the Deity and attempt to interpret his place in the universe.

The religious instruction and exploration of spiritual values in the life of man as developed and interpreted in the modern theater is implied in the following statement by twentieth-century American playwright Maxwell Anderson:

"... the theater is a religious institution devoted entirely to the exaltation of the spirit of man."<sup>1</sup>

#### Summary of the Theater's Contributions to Religious Instruction

The theater has had a religious connotation always. Primitive man used the dance and the rudiments of dramatic expression in the worship of his gods; the Egyptian theater

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<sup>1</sup>Maxwell Anderson, Off Broadway (New York: William Sloane Associates, Inc., 1947), p. 28.

was inseparable from the myth-and-ritualistic ceremonies of the culture. The ancient Greek theater incorporated into its drama the prevailing religious concepts of the civilization. The Greek playwrights interpreted these concepts to the people and considered it their obligation to guide audiences into inquiry and exploration of man's true relationship to his gods. The theater of the Middle Ages was an educative force in the hands of the clergy and was employed by it to reiterate and illustrate the history and dogma of the Church. With the dawn of humanism concurrent with the advent of the Renaissance religious instruction by the theater became less direct and was insinuated through theatrical visualization of the character of man as it guides and influences his life.

"The theater at its best is a religious affirmation, an age-old rite restating and reassuring man's belief in his own destiny and his ultimate hope."<sup>1</sup> In addition to developing and interpreting religious thought, the theater as an educative force has been influential in establishing and supporting social thought and custom.

The Theater: An Educative Force Establishing  
and Supporting Social Thought and Custom

Termed by Shaw "a social philosopher,"<sup>2</sup> the theater always has had ". . . an important social function and

<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 66.

<sup>2</sup>John Gassner, A Treasury of the Theatre (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1957), II, 539.

influence. Man's morals, customs, and thought have been changed in content as well as reflected in the religious, social, and human implications of the drama."<sup>1</sup> From the Greek times to the present, the history of the theater is fraught with social observation, interpretation, and evaluation; playwrights have employed their art to make constructive social comment.<sup>2</sup> In its role as a spokesman for current social philosophy, the theater has been an educational medium.

Social commentary in drama has influenced the public mind, and the theater as an educative force has had repercussions on the social order. The educational influence of the theater in the establishment and support of social thought and custom has been manifested in three respects: the molding of public opinion, the portraying of social norms or standards of behavior, and the effectuating of social change.

#### The Theater as it Molds Public Opinion

Greek audiences considered theater-going not only an entertaining occasion, but also an educational opportunity. "At a time when there were no circulating papers, practically no books available, and few able to read them in any event, the theater took a vital part in molding public opinion."<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup>World Book Encyclopedia, op. cit., IV, 2078.

<sup>2</sup>William Kozlenko (ed.), The Best Short Plays of the Social Theatre (New York: Random House, 1939), p. viii.

<sup>3</sup>Greek Drama, Philosophy, and Literature, Vol. III of The Delphian Course (Hammond, Indiana: W. B. Conkey Company, 1913), p. 1.

The Greek playwrights possessed considerable influence in the realm of public opinion. Aeschylus, for example, is described as ". . . molding the thoughts of society by his tremendous pronouncements of external principles."<sup>1</sup>

When the torch of theatrical art passed from Greek hands to Roman, official Rome considered the theater little more than a nuisance;<sup>2</sup> "but the power of the theatre in controlling public opinion could not be overlooked for long by wise senators."<sup>3</sup>

Nineteenth century playwrights acknowledged the propaganda value of the theater by writing plays clearly designed to expose social evils.<sup>4</sup> Ibsen stated that he wrote for the theater, in preference to other literary media, because he considered it to be the best means of reaching the public.<sup>5</sup> To promote an understanding of social problems and issues, Bertolt Brecht wrote propaganda plays which ". . . instructed or intended to instruct the common man as well as the class-conscious partisan in matters of strategy or right thinking."<sup>6</sup>

Twentieth century existentialist Jean-Paul Sartre recognized the influence of the theater on public sentiment.

<sup>1</sup>James and Janet Maclean Todd (eds.). Voices from the Past (New York: E. P. Dutton and Company, Inc., 1955), p. 118.

<sup>2</sup>Cheney, op. cit., p. 80.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid.

<sup>4</sup>Block, op. cit., p. 57.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., p. 21.

<sup>6</sup>Gassner, op. cit., II, 456.

The Flies.<sup>1</sup> written during the German occupation of the Second World War, stirred the imagination of a French people suffering under the oppression and humiliation of the Vichy policy of repentance and collaboration. The French thoughts and dreams of freedom were revitalized.

The educational impact of the theater as an instrument which creates, sways and/or crystallizes public opinion is perhaps most apparent in theatrically expressed attitudes toward the themes of war and of politics.

In The Trojan Women, Euripides deplored man's inhumanity to man as demonstrated by the fact of war. This play was particularly timely ". . . after the flagrantly barbarian events by Athens in the massacre of an entire island."<sup>2</sup> The Trojan Women reminded the citizenry of the bitter results of war and illustrated its folly. Aristophanes' plays presented ". . . the war madness of the Athenians and their susceptibility to demagoguery with strong misgivings. . . ."<sup>3</sup>

Brooks Atkinson expresses the influence of American playwrights on public attitudes toward war:

In the last quarter of a century the American theatre has given a good account of itself by penetrating through the bravura of war to the boredom, wretchedness and death which are its basic characteristics. Through the somewhat romantic iconoclasm of What

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<sup>1</sup>Frederick Lumley, Trends in Twentieth Century Drama (London: Rockcliff, 1956), pp. 149-156.

<sup>2</sup>Gassner, op. cit., I, 53.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 71.

Price Glory? the American theatre has progressed to the bitterness of Bury the Dead, the disillusion of Idiot's Delight and the poignant sympathy of The Eve of St. Mark. When people understand a subject realistically they achieve a state of consciousness that frees them from superstition; and if people understand this war, as they do in general, it is partly because the artists have understood it before them.<sup>1</sup>

Political themes in the theater also have shaped popular opinion. The Greek tragic theater had in part a political function. "The comedies of Aristophanes were in a large degree devoted to political propaganda."<sup>2</sup> In his hands, comedy ". . . became a powerful lash with which to attack political follies."<sup>3</sup> Greek playwrights became so adept at creating mass political feeling that they were forbidden by state decree to satirize a living person by name on the stage.<sup>4</sup>

John Galsworthy presented, in The Mob, a theme showing that ". . . cynical imperialist conquests and the throttling of opposition opinion go hand in hand,"<sup>5</sup> thereby creating an atmosphere of public resistance to such political techniques.

<sup>1</sup>Brooks Atkinson, "Artists Also Serve," Broadway Scrapbook (New York: Theatre Arts, Inc., 1947), p. 224. (The plays mentioned in this reference were written by Maxwell Anderson and Laurence Stallings, Irwin Shaw, Robert Sherwood, and Maxwell Anderson, respectively.)

<sup>2</sup>Komisarjevsky, op. cit., p. 7.

<sup>3</sup>Whiting, op. cit., p. 19.

<sup>4</sup>Hastings, op. cit., p. 38.

<sup>5</sup>Block, op. cit., p. 59.

The American musical-comedy joined the theatrical forms delving into political satire with Of Thee I Sing, 1930 Pulitzer Prize winner, by George S. Kaufman and Morrie Ryskind.

The specific themes in drama of war and of politics have been emphasized to illustrate the theater as an educative force active in creating and molding public opinion. The theater as an educative force establishing and supporting social thought and custom also involves a consideration of the theater as it portrays social norms and standards of behavior.

#### The Theater as It Portrays Social Norms and Standards of Behavior

The theater provides ". . . a free and full showing of human nature and the happenings of human experience."<sup>1</sup> It was to this theatrical characteristic that Granville-Barker referred when he classified the theater as a "microcosm of society."<sup>2</sup> Portrayal of social norms and standards of behavior is the province of the theatrical form of comedy. "The spirit of pure comedy is a spirit of critical laughter"<sup>3</sup> in that the best frame of reference for the

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<sup>1</sup>Story of the Drama, Vol. VII of The Delphian Course, op. cit., p. 3.

<sup>2</sup>Granville-Barker, op. cit., p. 37.

<sup>3</sup>Walley, op. cit., p. 217.

comic spirit is in the collective experience of society.

Whereas tragedy may concern itself with the pathos and terror of man when he is faced with isolation and loneliness, comedy derives its vitality from a picturization of man as he is entangled within the meshes of society.

Comedy ". . . surveys the human scene objectively and dispassionately; it cultivates the virtues of accurate perception and a just sense of proportion; it dispenses laughing justice according to the canons of wit and rational sanity."<sup>1</sup> Herein is implied the educational value of the comic form; comedy cultivates a critical insight which enables men to view themselves, their actions, and their society with a sense of proportion and a degree of objectivity. Through the comic medium, the weaknesses and foibles of men are exposed to caricature, ridicule, and merciless laughter. The theatrical parade of manners and morals of the immediate society is an inherent, if indirect, educative experience.

Aristophanes scolded Athens with comedies which ". . . deplored the relaxed manners and morality of his times."<sup>2</sup> Plautus utilized Roman comedy to ". . . expose selected characters to situations which would throw into relief their peculiarities and demonstrate their ridiculous incongruity with sane social standards."<sup>3</sup> Modern drama has

<sup>1</sup>Ibid.

<sup>2</sup>Gassner, op. cit., I, 71.

<sup>3</sup>Walley, op. cit., p. 218.

presented and critically evaluated the norms and standards of society in the plays of Shaw. Thornton Wilder's The Skin of Our Teeth re-emphasized the value of humor as a catalyst, reminding the American people in wartime not to take themselves too seriously. The most obvious examples of theatrical comedy as an educative force reflecting social norms and standards of behavior, however, occurred in the second half of the seventeenth century. This period gave rise to the French social comedy of Molière in the 1660's and the Restoration comedy of manners, beginning in the 1660's and existing through the first decade of the eighteenth century.

### Social Comedy

"Pure comedy is essentially social comedy, and its appropriate subjects are those aspects of human behavior which are inconsistent with the harmonious operation of a sane society."<sup>1</sup> Social comedy is not dependent upon action, but upon character portrayal and presentation of human relationships. The major interest of social comedy is in character types and the traits they exemplify; the characters in social comedy represent either particular social types or generalized aspects of human nature. Personal history of the characters is secondary to their social context. In social comedy, "the situations are contrived to bring out the salient features of these types under circumstances which

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 217.

afford a means of evaluating them."<sup>1</sup> In this respect, social comedy is an educative force; representative character types illustrate the social norms and standards of behavior of the current society in such a manner that audiences are forced into critical interpretation and evaluation of social standards. "As an expression of man's social instincts, social comedy makes its appeal to man's social sensibilities, and entertains by stimulating and refining his social perspicacity."<sup>2</sup>

Molière remains ". . . the world's supreme master of social comedy."<sup>3</sup> His targets were the ridiculous conventions in life, the faults in the structure of society, and the frailties of human nature as these were expressed in the French culture in the mid-1700's.<sup>4</sup> He presented human failings and satirized social pretensions with a portraiture of society that was penetrating in its critical insight. Molière's first comedy, Les Précieuses ridicules (The Affected Ladies), so incited the members of the French court with its satirization of their manners and morals that only the intervention of the King saved the play and its author from immediate theatrical extinction.<sup>5</sup> Kenneth MacGowan and

<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 218.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid.

<sup>4</sup>Cheney, op. cit., p. 331.

<sup>5</sup>MacGowan and Melnitz, op. cit., p. 205.

William Melnitz attest to the impact of Molière's social satire thus:

As Molière grew more caustic in his comedies, as he wrote more keenly and discerningly of the foibles of society, of the injustices done women, of the hypocrisy of some members of the clergy, attacks upon him and his plays increased. . . . The Archbishop of Paris banned the acting or seeing and the reading or hearing of Tartuffe on pain of excommunication.<sup>1</sup>

As Tartuffe's attack on a religious hypocrite exemplified Molière's satirization of individual frailty, Le Misanthrope exemplified his satirization of social mores.

Le Misanthrope has been described thus:

. . . a tart satire on the perennial ways of the social world. In one acid etching after another he passes in review the familiar inhabitants of the polite world--the fop, the coquette, the faded belle, the self-centered sophisticate--with all their accustomed frippery of affectation, vanity, envy, cruel wit, malicious gossip, and smug hypocrisy.<sup>2</sup>

As exemplified by the mastery of Molière, social comedy in the theater has been an educative force in that it inspires audience interpretation and evaluation of the current social norms and standards of behavior.

### The Comedy of Manners

The comedy of manners evolved in the seventeenth century English theater and was designed to appeal to the elegant members of court society who comprised the limited Restoration audiences. The major component of the comedy of

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., pp. 205-206.

<sup>2</sup>Walley, loc. cit.

manners was the question of socially accepted or correct deportment. Whereas social comedy was concerned with good sense in relation to social behavior, the comedy of manners was devoted to the element of good taste. The comedy of manners ". . . consisted of a deliberate restriction of dramatic interest to the single specialized subject of manners; that is, to the characteristic mode of behavior developed by an organized society."<sup>1</sup>

The comedy of manners, as was the social comedy of Molière, was an indirect educational device; in the comedy of manners, ". . . a society was observed, if only by way of caricature; a norm of sophistication was assumed, and deviations from it were reprehended with ridicule."<sup>2</sup> Again audiences were compelled to view the manners and morals of the socially approved man and his actions as illustrated by the types and characteristics displayed on the stage.

William Wycherley ". . . openly paraded the inverted moral values"<sup>3</sup> of the Restoration in The Country Wife and The Plain Dealer. William Congreve portrayed the moral laxity and the social norms currently in vogue through the characters of Mirabell and Millamant in The Way of the World; neither character is ". . . perturbed by the insincerities of affectation. To them the social graces are a matter of supreme

<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 257.

<sup>2</sup>Gassner, op. cit., I, p. 387.

<sup>3</sup>MacGowan and Melnitz, op. cit., p. 234.

importance."<sup>1</sup> Wycherley and Congreve illustrate the concern of the comedy of manners with the questions of deportment and behavior. This same interest is present in such comedies of manners as Etherege's The Man of Mode, George Farquhar's The Beaux' Strategem, Richard Brinsley Sheridan's The School for Scandal, and Italian Carlo Goldoni's The Mistress of the Inn. Modified forms of the comedy of manners exist in more modern dramas: Oscar Wilde's The Importance of Being Earnest, Howard Lindsay and Russel Crouse's Life With Father, and George S. Kaufman and Moss Hart's You Can't Take It With You.

Ben Jonson expressed the opinion that all art had a mission; he implied the educational value of the comedy of manners with his belief that the particular mission of comedy was to castigate erring humanity.<sup>2</sup>

The comedy of manners in the English Restoration recognized two categories of human beings: those who lived up to the standards of social behavior and those who failed to do so.<sup>3</sup> This categorization was accepted by the middle classes as they joined the court nobles and aristocrats in the theater audiences. The standards of behavior, however, were those of the aristocracy; at this concept the middle classes revolted, demanding theatrical illustration of the manners and morals applicable to the social strata that they

<sup>1</sup>Walley, op. cit., p. 260.

<sup>2</sup>Gassner, op. cit., I, 203.

<sup>3</sup>Walley, op. cit., p. 257.

inhabited.

The demands of the middle class resulted in two types of drama: the comédie larmoyante, or "tearful" comedies, and the drame bourgeois, or dramas of middle class life.<sup>1</sup> George Lillo, in The London Merchant or The History of George Barnwell, 1731, ". . . exalted the merchant class and presented no character of genteel or noble birth."<sup>2</sup> Lessing in Germany made ". . . tearful comedy and bourgeois tragedy widely palatable."<sup>3</sup> The comedy of manners was thus replaced as the sole occupant of the English stage.

The latter half of the seventeenth century was the era of the social comedy and the comedy of manners, the educational impact of which was a portrayal of socially approved behavior which forced men to view themselves and their way of life critically. The theater ". . . offers us criteria for deciding what is good and what is evil"<sup>4</sup> as it portrays social norms and standards of behavior.

A final aspect of the theater establishing and supporting social thought and custom requires an analyzation of the theatrical influence resulting in social change.

<sup>1</sup>MacGowan and Melnitz, op. cit., p. 274.

<sup>2</sup>Whiting, op. cit., p. 55.

<sup>3</sup>Cheney, op. cit., p. 415.

<sup>4</sup>Anderson, op. cit., p.34.

## Chapter 11 The Theater as It Effectuates Social Change

Establishment and support of social thought and custom has existed in the theater as an indirect educative force in various periods of theatrical history: public opinion has been molded by the theatrical institution, and audiences have derived from the theater standards for critical evaluation of current social norms and standards of behavior. In certain isolated instances, however, there is evidence that the theater has had a direct influence on social dynamics; educational influence has been exerted by the theater that has resulted in specific social changes. The theater as a "... medium through which to utter protest against conditions"<sup>1</sup> has contributed to the alteration of existing social conditions and prevalent social attitudes. "Change, then is the basis of drama. Dramatic art deals with changing human conditions,"<sup>2</sup> and a theater which presents social problems calling for solution is vital to the needs of society.<sup>3</sup>

Perhaps the classic example of the theater as a contributing factor in social change was the dramatization of Harriet Beecher Stowe's Uncle Tom's Cabin. This play increased public opposition to slavery and assisted in the creation of a public sentiment which resulted in the American

<sup>1</sup>Block, op. cit., p. 195.

<sup>2</sup>Selden, op. cit., p. 75.

<sup>3</sup>Block, op. cit., p. 63.

Civil War in the 1860's. Social legislation has been hastened and social attitudes radically changed by theatrical portrayal of current social conditions. This is perhaps most clearly illustrated by three social conditions that have been the subject of theatrical concern: the exploitation of labor, the social injustices affecting women, and the existence of an aristocratic social class.

"Gerhardt Hauptmann was the first dramatist with the vision and the courage to discard the individual as hero and present instead a social group as hero."<sup>1</sup> Hauptmann's The Weavers was the first deliberately written social drama to provoke fierce hostility and incite riots with its realistic picture of a group of exploited and starving Silesian weavers daring rebellion against the conditions imposed on the laboring class during the 1840's.<sup>2</sup> Hauptmann argued that individuals behave as they do because they belong to certain social groups, and The Weavers remains the prototype of plays deliberately written to bring the cause of the exploited working class to the attention of theater audiences.<sup>3</sup> John Galsworthy's treatment of the clash between labor and capital in Strife and Emlyn Williams' picture of life in the Welsh coal-mining district in The Corn Is Green are other examples

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 34.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 18.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 34.

of the theater's presentation of the cause of exploited labor. These plays and others of similar nature resulted in changes of social attitudes and contributed to legislation improving the plight of the laboring classes.

The cause of the modern woman has been a subject for dramatization by the theater as it is concerned with effectuating social change. Leo Tolstoy in The Living Corpse strongly attacked the marriage laws of Russia.<sup>1</sup> Ibsen insisted in repeated dramas that ". . . the institution of marriage may result in spiritual slavery to false ideals and conventions and in hypocrisies and insincerities which stunt and deaden the soul."<sup>2</sup> Ibsen regarded the women of his times as essential victims of society in that their status as a submerged sex was responsible both for the wrongs committed against them and the wrongs they themselves were committing; he created in his dramas an extraordinary galaxy of women who revealed the unhappy and untenable position of women in the modern world.<sup>3</sup> In The Doll's House, "Nora Helmer spoke, not merely for herself, but for women all over the world; the words Ibsen put into her mouth crystallized thoughts then fermenting in women's minds everywhere."<sup>4</sup> Changes in social attitudes

<sup>1</sup>Encyclopedia Britannica, op. cit., V, 309.

<sup>2</sup>Ramsden Balforth, The Problem-Play (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1928), p. 44.

<sup>3</sup>Block, op. cit., pp. 24-25.

<sup>4</sup>The Encyclopedia Americana, op. cit., VII, 309.

toward the status of women have been effectuated by the theater; in discussing plays of the modern world, Anita Block states:

No feminist treatise . . . ever portrayed for us the male-dominated slave-woman of those unregenerate days as fearlessly and as unforgettably as did Ibsen's A Doll's House. No treatise on the crying need in the 90's for the most elementary sex education of the young ever aroused a world of benighted Mr. and Mrs. Grundys as did Wedekind's children's tragedy, The Awakening of Spring. No Socialist treatise on the cynical lust for profits engendered by capitalism ever exposed some of its quite amoral beneficiaries more bitingly than did Shaw's Mrs. Warren's Profession.<sup>1</sup>

The doom of the aristocratic upper classes has been treated most clearly in the drama of Soviet Russia. The clarity of human characterization of the members of this class in Russian drama not only served as prophetic, but contributed directly to the downfall of the class as audiences were reminded of the existent social condition. The dramas of Leo Tolstoy illustrate this concept:

. . . His gift for characterization and overwhelming moral passion carried everything before him. His first great play, The Power of Darkness, was a realistic, detailed, and deeply sympathetic study of peasant life. The Fruits of Culture bitterly satirized the upper class and indicted their treatment of the peasants, who in this play were shown humbly and respectfully requesting amelioration of their intolerable living and working conditions. . . . The play, containing prophetic rumbles of the approaching social storm which was to overwhelm the country later, aroused large landholders in Russia to fear and fury.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Block, op. cit., p. 19.

<sup>2</sup>Encyclopedia Britannica, op. cit., V. 309.

Anton Chekov, in The Cherry Orchard, portrayed the decadent upper and middle classes of Russian society and thereby lifted a voice equally prophetic to that of Tolstoy of the impending doom of the Russian aristocracy. The Cherry Orchard is described as:

. . . a universal drama of destiny. It speaks for all orders that are fated to pass away, for the humanity that suffers in the course of a transition from an old way of life to a new one, and for all individuals in whom the capacity for adaptation to new conditions is underdeveloped -- for all the victims of history, so to speak.<sup>1</sup>

In the areas of exploitation of labor, social injustice toward women, and the doom of the aristocratic upper classes are found the theater's most easily and clearly discerned contributions to social change.

#### Summary of the Theater's Influence in the

#### Establishment and Support of Social

#### Thought and Custom

Theatrical observation, interpretation, and evaluation of the customs and conditions of society have influenced the public mind and have had repercussions on the social order in varying degrees throughout the history of the theater. The inherent educational influence of the theater in the creation and shaping of public opinion has been illustrated by a consideration of the specific dramatic themes of war and of politics. The indirect influence of the theater as an

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<sup>1</sup>Gassner, op. cit., II, 206.

educative force through the portrayal of social norms and standards of behavior has been presented as a factor of social comedy and the comedy of manners, forms which encourage and inspire audiences to interpret and evaluate current social norms and standards with heightened critical insight. The direct educational impact of the theater as it effectuates social change has been suggested by a brief review of theatrical portrayal of the social conditions of exploited labor, the social injustices perpetrated against women, and the inevitable doom of privileged social classes.

In Chapter II, thus far, the theater has been considered as an educative force developing and interpreting religious thought and as an educative force establishing and supporting social thought and custom. A final illustration of the theater as an educational influence presents the theater as a means of enriching cultural and intellectual climate.

### The Theater: An Educative Force Enriching Cultural and Intellectual Climate

Educational philosopher and theorist Alfred North Whitehead has stated that "art and literature have not merely an indirect effect on the main energies of life. Directly, they give vision."<sup>1</sup> The theater, as an art and as a form of literature, possesses the capacity to present ideas and

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<sup>1</sup>Whitehead, op. cit., p. 68.

concepts which contribute to the cultural and intellectual development of audiences. "There is no other place but the theater (save the Church) where people, by means of powerful emotional experiences, can be influenced directly by ideas."<sup>1</sup>

Playwright and theatrical philosopher Maxwell Anderson expressed similar sentiments in an essay on the theater: "There is reason for belief that there is no other way of communicating new concepts save the artist's way, no other way save the artist's way of illuminating new pathways in the mind."<sup>2</sup>

"The stage is the best school for the people"<sup>3</sup> because within the confines of theatrical performance are implications for human thought and intellectual stimulation.<sup>4</sup> Romain Rolland, in his classic manifesto Le Théâtre de Peuple, advanced the concept that the theater should and does serve as a guiding light to the intelligence.<sup>5</sup> Because the drama brings into human consciousness flashes of truth which help to give human beings a clearer insight into human nature and a more penetrating intellectual vision,<sup>6</sup> "the theater is a

<sup>1</sup>Komisarjevsky, op. cit., p. 4.

<sup>2</sup>Anderson, op. cit., p. 36.

<sup>3</sup>Komisarjevsky, op. cit., p. 5.

<sup>4</sup>Cheney, op. cit., p. 451.

<sup>5</sup>Eric Bentley, The Playwright as Thinker (New York: Meridian Books, 1957), p. 253.

<sup>6</sup>Balmforth, The Problem Play, p. 141.

democratic art, a democracy of the mind."<sup>1</sup>

In an analyzation of the playwright as a thinker, Eric Bentley stated, "In the days before general literacy, the drama was (with the sermon) the great bond between verbal culture and the people. . . ."<sup>2</sup> In the civilization of Greece, intellectual climate was more sharply defined as thought filtered into the dramatists' work in the form of moral, social, and philosophical inquiry; discursive reasoning and intellectual discussion penetrated deeply into Greek drama.<sup>3</sup> Aristophanes, for example, cultivated intellectual standards of literary criticism among the citizenry with The Frogs.

If the recreating process in the theatrical realm was less complete than in the other arts during the Italian Renaissance, the revival of and the return to the ancient forms of theater was, nonetheless, a means of propaganda for classic culture. The classic dramas proved the greatness of man in the past, and to the man of the present they gave confidence as "humanism grew and flowered with the discovery and study of classic literature . . . which dealt the death blow to medieval domination over the minds of men."<sup>4</sup>

The Elizabethan theater continued the educational contributions of the Renaissance theater in the intellectual

<sup>1</sup>Anderson, op. cit., p. 69.

<sup>2</sup>Bentley, op. cit., p. 237.

<sup>3</sup>Gassner, op. cit., I, 2.

<sup>4</sup>MacGowan and Melnitz, op. cit., p. 73.

realm. "Few could read, of course, but an audience that couldn't read could have very sharp ears and an eagerness for ideas and emotions that could come only from the stage."<sup>1</sup>

American drama in the twentieth century has been characterized by an entire generation of writers determined not to allow spiritual, artistic, and intellectual growth to be stunted.<sup>2</sup> Arthur Miller is representative of these writers; "insofar as it exposes the hollowness of materialistic values, The Death of a Salesman carries on the cultural rebellion staged by the playwrights, novelists, critics, and artists of the 1900's."<sup>3</sup>

The writings of Jean-Paul Sartre were greeted as signs of a twentieth century renaissance of French culture and intellectual inquiry; there was ". . . widespread recognition for Sartre as a spiritual and intellectual leader in his country."<sup>4</sup>

Man's driving need to acquire a clear concept of himself, his need to understand his own nature, is given intellectual stimulation by the theatrical ". . . ability to communicate an understanding and a vision of life."<sup>5</sup> The

<sup>1</sup>Ibid.

<sup>2</sup>Gassner, op. cit., II, 775-76.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 1062.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p. 466.

<sup>5</sup>Eleanor Flexner, American Playwrights, 1918-1938 (New York: Simon and Schuster, Inc., 1938), p. 3.

theatrical quality of illumination and appraisal of the nature of mankind is an inherent feature of its intellectual justification. The drama enables humanity to ". . . extend our consciousness of living man, working out his destiny against the background of other living men, revealing to us his hopes and frustrations, his endorsements and denials, showing him to be the sensitive agent who responds constantly to inner and outer forces of life."<sup>1</sup>

Humanity's overwhelming tendency toward introspective analyzation was recognized as early as the plays of Euripides. "Throughout most of his plays runs a . . . fascination with the human and psychological motives behind men's acts."<sup>2</sup> Modern drama has been distinguished by a deep interest in both normal and abnormal psychology, in individual motivations, and in heredity and environment as determining agents of the human personality.<sup>3</sup>

The theater, by virtue of its artistic and literary nature, is capable of instilling and developing criteria and standards of intellectual and cultural achievement. The drama as an educative force is an influence in the process of enriching the cultural and intellectual climate of a given society.

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<sup>1</sup>Kozlenko, op. cit., p. viii.

<sup>2</sup>Whiting, op. cit., p. 17.

<sup>3</sup>Cooper, op. cit., pp. 131-132.

### Summary

Chapter III has enumerated selected historical illustrations attesting to the influence of the theater and its drama upon the education of man. To establish a frame of reference for the ensuing comments about specific plays and playwrights, a chronological summary of dramatic history was given which traced the evolution of the theater from pre-classic dramatic expression in primitive societies to the twentieth century.

The theater as an educative force developing and interpreting religious thought was the first subject of discussion. The close correlation between the theater and religion was examined. This was followed by illustrations of religious instruction in the theaters of Greece and the Middle Ages and of religious thought as expressed by the theater after the medieval period.

The theater as an educative force establishing and supporting social thought and custom was the next concept investigated. The theater as it molds public opinion was illustrated by the recurring dramatic themes of war and of politics. Comedy, in the forms of social comedy and the comedy of manners, was cited as the theatrical device most influential in the portrayal of social norms and standards of behavior. The theater's effectuation of social change was analyzed as social attitudes have been altered and social

legislation has been hastened by theatrical presentation of three particular social conditions: the exploitation of labor, the social injustices against women, and the condemnation of privileged social classes.

The final consideration of Chapter III was of the theater as an educative force enriching cultural and intellectual climate. This was shown to be an inevitable result of the nature of the theater as an artistic and literary form.

Chapter IV considers the theater as an educational influence operative in the modern world. As a modern educative force, the theater provides insight into the heritage of contemporary cultures; and its plays provide educational experiences through their religious connotations, social implications, and intellectual stimulation. Chapter IV also investigates the theater as an educational factor leading to increased international understanding.

## CHAPTER IV

### THE THEATER AS AN EDUCATIVE FORCE IN THE MODERN WORLD

#### Introduction

Specific illustrations of the educational influence of the theater in various historical periods were presented in Chapter III. The educational impact of the theatrical institution, however, is not limited to the theater of past ages. If the theater existed as an educative force within the social structure of the ancient Greek community, within the religious context of the Medieval Church, within the intellectual and artistic climate of the Renaissance, et cetera, it would follow that the same educational attributes accrue to the theatrical medium in the modern world. The purpose of Chapter IV, therefore, is to present the concept of the theater as an educative force in twentieth century civilizations.

"One may not divide the seamless coat of learning. What education has to impart is an intimate sense for the power of ideas, for the beauty of ideas, and for the structure of ideas. . . ."<sup>1</sup> The educational function of imparting ideas and concepts is adhered to by the theatrical institution.

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<sup>1</sup>Whitehead, op. cit., p. 23.

in the modern world as in the past. The theater in the modern world, therefore, is an educative force.

Chapter IV entails a three-fold consideration of the theater as an educative force in contemporary society. The study of theatrical history is presented as a contributing factor to the process of continuing education<sup>1</sup> and to the acquisition of a deeper insight into the cultural heritage of modern man. Modern plays are analyzed as providing educational experiences in the realms of religious instruction, portrayal of social conditions, and intellectual stimulation. A final consideration is of the theater as a factor in increasing international understanding among the peoples of the world community.

#### Continuing Education and Cultural Insight

#### Provided by the Study of

#### Theatrical History

"Education, in its essence, is the cultivation of the human mind--the growth of understanding and insight and, perhaps, some wisdom."<sup>2</sup> Education defined in this light is not

<sup>1</sup>The discussion of continuing education in Chapter IV is based upon a concept developed and articulated by Frank E. Faux, lay scholar and philosopher of Memphis Tennessee; Mr. Faux is accorded a respected position in his church and within his community as an advanced thinker and a prominent lay educator. The concept was imparted to the author of this study through personal conversation with Mr. Faux and through an address delivered by him.

<sup>2</sup>Frank E. Faux, "The Spiritual Values in Continuing Education" (Paper read before the meeting of the Memphis Adult Education Council, Kentucky Lake, Paris, Tennessee, September, 1952).

achieved exclusively in a classroom; nor does it conclude with the attainment of a diploma from an educational institution. Education is, rather, a process that is both comprehensive and continuing. Continuing education requires that an individual accumulate understanding, insight, and a degree of wisdom which are applicable to contemporary life; continuing education develops within the individual a comprehension of the contemporary world by which he is surrounded and in which he exists.

As is any civilization, the modern civilization is the product of a cumulative process. Modern culture is compounded of the elements and achievements of prior cultures. A knowledge of and an understanding of the cultural characteristics of past eras is an inherent feature of continuing education; only through a study of the past can modern man achieve a sense of perspective which gives him perception and insight into the true foundations of his contemporary society.

Insight into, understanding of, and appreciation for the cultures of past eras results from an acquaintanceship with the masters of the past, individual contemplation of the philosophy and concepts expressed by them, and a sharing with others of the insights obtained.<sup>1</sup> Continuing education is a vital need of modern civilization because:

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<sup>1</sup> Ibid.

Since the beginning of time, man has been asking questions of himself. . . . He is still asking, perhaps now more than ever before. Each epoch in human culture leaves its mark. Thus, if we are to continue our education and evaluate our heritage, we must examine the religion, history, politics, and philosophy of the Greeks; the politics and society of the ancient Hebrews; the humanism of the Chinese; the asceticism of India. . . .<sup>1</sup>

Man's freedom and capacity are such that he can select, change, and improve his heritage based upon the knowledges and understandings he acquires through a study of the past.<sup>2</sup>

It is generally recognized that every civilization creates an artistic style of its own; in attempting to ascertain the elements and characteristics of any particular civilization, the aesthetic test is the surest index.<sup>3</sup> The theatrical art provides insight into the cultures of the past through the enduring fund of knowledge and source of enlightenment preserved within the literature of the theater. Understanding of the modern world civilization can be increased by a study of the theater, and thereby the cultures, of past eras.

The modern individual can experience continuing education and can gain insight into his cultural heritage through a study of theatrical history because ". . . ever since the

<sup>1</sup>Ibid.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

<sup>3</sup>Arnold J. Toynbee, A Study of History, Vol. I. Abridgement of Volumes I-VI by D. C. Somervell (London: Oxford University Press, 1946), p. 241.

dramatic medium took shape, much of the world's experience and perception has been poured into it."<sup>1</sup> The theatrical institution, its history, and its drama provide a means of acquiring knowledge of the past because the culture and ethics of any previous society can be evaluated through a study of its respective theater.<sup>2</sup>

"Wheresoever man has once set up the living image of his essence, he leaves a memorial which can never wholly die. Such memorials are the signatures of the great dramatists."<sup>3</sup> The message of the theater, like that of every other art and every other institution, is one chapter in the larger story of the intellectual and spiritual evolution of the world.<sup>4</sup> A study of the theater of the past and a reading of the plays of history aid in the clarification of man's heritage and of his cultural setting.

Of what relevance is it for modern man to include within his continuing education a comprehensive study of the theater's evolution? A partial answer is found in the fact that great writers transcend their immediate environment; they are guides of later ages as well as the seers and prophets of their generation.<sup>5</sup> The reading of dramas of

<sup>1</sup>Gassner, op. cit., I. xii.

<sup>2</sup>Nichols, loc. cit., pp. 180-181.

<sup>3</sup>Walley, op. cit., p. 59.

<sup>4</sup>Balmforth, The Ethical and Religious Value of the Drama, p. 239.

<sup>5</sup>Todd, op. cit., p. 26.

past ages acquaints man with things that are universal in that they have happened before and promise to recur in the future. Theatrical history provides insight in that ". . . the very simplicity of the ancient world sometimes caused problems to be stated with a clear-cut precision which is illuminating to a public stupefied by the complexities of modern life."<sup>1</sup> Further values inherent in a study of theatrical history include an increased familiarity with classic literature and styles of writing, historical events and interpretations, cultural and social mores, archaeological interests in costuming and architecture of particular eras, religious and aesthetic concepts: all cultural standards and achievements which have influenced the evolution of modern civilization.

Because a study of theatrical history and dramatic heritage contributes to the process of continuing education and provides modern man with insight into his contemporary culture, such a study qualifies the theater as an educative force in the modern world. A consideration of the theater as a modern educative force also involves an analysis of representative plays which place the theatrical medium within the realm of education.

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 25.

Religious, Social, and Intellectual Education  
by the Modern Theater

Specific playwrights and plays were cited in Chapter III as examples of the theater as an educative force in various periods of history in the areas of religious instruction, portrayal of social norms and standards of behavior, and enrichment of cultural and intellectual climate. The educational impact of the theater, however, is not confined to past eras; the theater ". . . has fulfilled and still serves many purposes in man's life, playing a part in religion, education, art, and entertainment."<sup>1</sup> To illustrate the modern theater as an educative force, three specific plays are analyzed: J.B., representing religious thought exemplified in modern drama; Waiting for Lefty, illustrating the interest of the modern theater in social conditions; and Death of a Salesman, reflecting the concern of the modern theater with the intellectual pursuit of man's psychological motivations.

J. B.: Religious Connotations

Religious instruction by the dramatic medium has been discussed as being most apparent in the theaters of ancient Greece and the Middle Ages. The correlation between religion and the theater, however, also exists in modern drama. The

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<sup>1</sup>Edmond Fuller, A Pageant of the Theatre (New York: Thomas Y. Crowell Co., 1941), p. 41.

interest of modern drama in religious concepts is illustrated by J. B., Archibald MacLeish's modern verse dramatization of the Biblical story of Job, produced in 1958.

The Biblical account presents the conflict between God and the Devil over Job, described by the Lord as ". . . a perfect and an upright man, one that feareth God, and escheweth evil. . . ."<sup>1</sup> The Devil challenges God to visit certain trials and tortures upon this perfect man, thereby testing his uprightness and his devotion to God. Despite the horrors inflicted upon him, Job repents and is therefore rewarded by the return of all that was taken from him.

MacLeish modernizes the Biblical legend by placing the happenings within a contemporary setting and re-naming Job as J.B. The figures of God and the Devil are represented in the play by the characters of Zuss and Nickles, respectively, broken-down actors working in a circus. Their function in the play is a dual one: they serve as exposition, assuming the roles of the Godhead and the personification of Evil, presenting the origin of the challenge, and explaining in advance and in retrospect the tests to which J.B. is subjected; they also serve as interpretation, personifying the opposing forces of good and evil as they affect man's existence.

During the course of the play, alternately heckled and encouraged by Nickles and Zuss, J.B. is inflicted with

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<sup>1</sup>Job 1: 8.

successively torturous circumstances. His five children are killed:

One daughter raped and murdered by an idiot,  
 Another crushed by stones, a son  
 Destroyed by some fool officer's stupidity,  
 Two children smeared across a road  
 At midnight by a drunken child. . .<sup>1</sup>

His wife leaves him, and his skin is seared with boils. The calamities visited upon Job are recognizably American misfortunes, but are sufficiently generalized to represent universal suffering. They are ". . . sufficiently typical to symbolize adequately Misfortune itself."<sup>2</sup>

Job, therefore, is symbolic of modern man universal:

What justification is there for choosing Job as the symbol of modern man? . . . Job, sitting with his boils among the ashes and surrounded by comforters who do not comfort best represents us at every stage of his career. In his prosperity and confidence he represents a civilization that was never so prosperous as ours still is, never so sure that God was on his side as, up to a generation ago, we still were. The calamities that fall upon him are those that have already fallen upon half the world, and of which we here feel the threatening shadow. . . . Even in his self-pity Job is Modern Man. . .<sup>3</sup>

The central problem of J.B. is the age-old question: since an innocent man suffers, is he paying the penalty for some unknown guilt, or is God himself guilty of unreasoning and cruel injustice? The conflict of the play rests in this

<sup>1</sup>Archibald MacLeish, J.B. (Cambridge, Mass.: The Riverside Press, 1956), p. 93.

<sup>2</sup>Joseph Wood Krutch, "The Universe at Stage Center," Theatre Arts, Vol. XLII, No. 8 (August, 1958), p. 11.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 10.

concept: is God just or does man suffer needlessly? Although the problem is not solved completely within the context of the play, J.B.'s very awareness of the question ". . . constitutes him Man,"<sup>1</sup> because today, as in the yesterdays of history, man continues to ask the same questions, to seek the same answers. MacLeish's reinterpretation of the Biblical legend illustrates the universal groping of men for answers to the basic questions and for explanations of the minimal meaning of human life.

MacLeish, in J.B.'s presentation of man's universal search for answers to universal questions, assumes that one vital subject of modern drama is the eternal question of and analyzation of man's relation to the universe and to his God. This play re-emphasizes the impact of the theater as an educative force in the modern world, reflecting interest in and exploration of religious thought.

#### Waiting for Lefty: Social Implications

One of the obsessions of the theatrical public since Hauptmann's The Weavers has been an interest in the subject of "the little man" and his place in society. This subject has been dealt with consistently in the American theater; Clifford Odets' Waiting for Lefty, produced in 1935, exemplifies the concern of the modern social drama with the living human values

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 11.

of the common man. Waiting for Lefty is ". . . at once a vivid chronicle of the struggles of men and women, and a social document,"<sup>1</sup> which symbolizes some of the major human conflicts in contemporary society.

Each of Odets' plays embodies some basic criticism of society. In Waiting for Lefty, a taxi-cab strike becomes synonymous with the evils of a capitalistic society. The play's social implications are described thus:

It depicts the struggles and uncertainties of a group of harrassed men and women in a depressed economic system. It culminates in a strike: a contemporary symbol of rebellion against exploitation and inertia. With it is engendered a hope that, ultimately, these unfortunate men and women will achieve some measure of spiritual and economic security.<sup>2</sup>

The over-all effect of the play has been described as one of contagion.<sup>3</sup> It consists of a series of vignettes portraying the moment of decision in the lives of the pro-strike delegates; this animated structure had a profound effect on audiences. Especially effective was the inflammatory device of turning the play into a strike meeting with actors planted in the audience proper.

Waiting for Lefty is designed to simulate a meeting of the union of taxi-cab drivers in New York City. As the play opens, the head of the union admonishes the workers, assumed to be the audience, not to strike and assures them

<sup>1</sup>Kozlenko, op. cit., p. x.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

<sup>3</sup>John Gassner, The Theatre in Our Times (New York: Crown Publishers, 1954), p. 300.

that the union is supporting their interests. Lefty, the chairman of the workers' committee that is agitating for a strike, has not appeared; the ensuing events occur while the group waits for Lefty.

Selected speeches by various characters in the play serve to illustrate the tremendous impact such a play must have had on audiences in the 1930's when society was just beginning to feel the effect of organized labor movements.

Joe, one of the members of the union audience, addresses the group with the universal complaint of exploited labor: "You know what we are? The black and blue boys. We been kicked around so long we're black and blue from head to toes."<sup>1</sup> Joe's wife Edna, through a flashback technique, epitomizes the ancient appeal implied in the suffering-women-and-children motif:

I just put the kids to bed so they won't know they missed a meal; if I don't have Emmy's shoes soled tomorrow, she can't go to school. . . . Your boss is making suckers outa you boys. Yes, and suckers out of all the wives and the poor innocent kids who'll grow up with crooked spines and sick bones.<sup>2</sup>

Edna also issues an inciting call to oppressed labor factions:

I don't say one man! I say a hundred, a thousand, a whole million, I say. But start in your own union. Get those hack boys together! Sweep out those racketeers like a pile of dirt! Stand up like men and fight for the crying wives and kids.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Clifford Odets, Waiting for Lefty, in The Best Short Plays of the Social Theatre, ed. William Kozlenko (New York: Random House, 1939), p. 7.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., pp. 8-10.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 12.

Another scene in Waiting for Lefty depicts a young laboratory assistant and his capitalistic employer, the manufacturer of a poison gas. The manufacturer represents the depraved and inhumane aspects of management as he says: "If big business went sentimental over human life, there wouldn't be big business of any sort!"<sup>1</sup>

The play concludes with a decision by the group to strike as a result of the news that Lefty has been shot and as a result of the call-to-arms issued by Agate, another union member:

Fight with us for right! It's war! Working class,  
unite and fight! Tear down the slaughter house of  
our old lives. Let freedom really ring!<sup>2</sup>

The speeches quoted in the foregoing pages indicate the tenor of Odets' representation of the down-trodden laboring class and the inhumanity of management. As such, while perhaps presenting an exaggerated picture of the situation, Waiting for Lefty nevertheless had a tremendous impact on theatrical audiences of the 1930's. This play demonstrates the social implications existent within the theater as an educative force in the modern world.

#### Death of a Salesman: Intellectual Stimulation

"The playwright's chief task remains to understand and illuminate for his audience the behavior of his fellow

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 15.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 30.

man."<sup>1</sup> As was noted in Chapter III, modern drama manifests a strong interest in the psychological study of the motives and causes which impel human actions. Intellectual stimulation is derived from the theater as it investigates the psychological complexion of dramatic characters. The theater's educative function in this sense is illustrated by Arthur Miller's Death of a Salesman, produced in 1949.

Miller has fashioned a comprehensive drama by pushing inward to investigate human motives and causes in his modern tragedy of Willy Loman.<sup>2</sup> The play traces the fate and the final reckoning of a commonplace man in a commonplace environment,<sup>3</sup> and thus caters to the passion of modern theater audiences for delving into the psychological motivations behind the behavior of ordinary individuals. The paramount question in the minds of the audience as they watch Death of a Salesman is not the standard theatrical inquiry of "What is going to happen next?" or "Will the hero win or lose?" In this particular play the fate of the hero is obvious from the title and from the action in the first scenes, and the important question becomes "What is really the matter and why?"<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup>W. David Sievers, Freud on Broadway (New York: Hermitage House, 1955), p. 454.

<sup>2</sup>Gassner, The Theatre in Our Times, p. 372.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 365.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p. 372.

Death of a Salesman is the chronicle of Willy Loman, a sixty-three-year-old salesman. As the play opens, Willy is returning to his home in Brooklyn instead of continuing on his planned sales trip; he has discovered he cannot control his car. His sons decide to go into business for themselves, one of them intending to ask a former employer for financial backing. Willy is fired from his life-long job, and the son Biff fails to acquire the loan. Willy, under the press of these circumstances, kills himself.

The plot sequence of the play, however, is not its most salient feature. The vital interest in Death of a Salesman is the portrayal of an individual, his doubts and his fears, his dreams and his ideals, his frustrations and his failures.

"Willy Loman accepts the denatured ideals of American society--not the values considered the highest, but those that were over-publicized in America."<sup>1</sup> He is a naive victim of success-worship; his failure results from his worship of the wrong kind of success, a kind of success found to be hollow when it is exposed. In Willy's estimation, being "well liked" epitomizes the ultimate of achievement, and he substitutes this aspiration for any sort of goal of solid accomplishment. Certain speeches from the play illustrate Willy's over-devotion to the superficial value of being well

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<sup>1</sup>Gassner, A Treasury of the Theatre, Vol. II, p. 1061.

liked, his ruling philosophy of life:

It's not what you do, Ben. It's who you know and the smile on your face. It's contacts, Ben, contacts.<sup>1</sup>

. . . the man who makes an appearance in the business world, the man who creates personal interest, is the man who gets ahead. Be liked and you will never want.<sup>2</sup>

That's just the way I'm bringing them up, Ben--rugged, well liked, all-around.<sup>3</sup>

Willy's desire to provide for his family is one of the major motivations in his life. Many of his fears stem from a vague feeling that he is failing in this respect. This fear is expressed when he says, "I get the feeling that I'll never sell anything again, that I won't make a living for you, or a business, a business for the boys."<sup>4</sup> Articulations of fear alternate with expressions of supreme confidence. Willy's confidence, however, falls within the realm of delusions, created because of an innate inability to admit failure and preserved to compensate for a feeling of failure; man must preserve his delusions to preserve his pride. Willy's bravado is implicit in his line, "Oh, I'll knock 'em dead next week. I'll go to Hartford. I'm very well liked in Hartford."<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Arthur Miller, Death of a Salesman, in A Treasury of the Theatre, Vol. II, compiled by John Gassner (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1957), p. 1085.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 1069.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 1074.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p. 1071.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., p. 1070.

Willy's reliance on false values and his clinging to delusory concepts results in an inability to face facts, which is expressed when he says, ". . . don't give me a lecture about facts and aspects. I'm not interested."<sup>1</sup>

Willy convinces himself that suicide is his wisest recourse because it will provide money from his insurance policy to finance Biff's business. After Willy's death, Biff utters the lines that perhaps best summarize Willy's character: "He had the wrong dream. All, all wrong. . . . He never knew who he was."<sup>2</sup>

Death of a Salesman presents causes and motivations of individual actions; through such plays, the theater is an educative force in the modern world providing intellectual stimulation for the psychological analyzation of human behavior.

The three plays discussed in the foregoing pages are plays of the American theater; they were selected for analyzation because they were American plays, thereby being within the scope of experience of the writer. The educational characteristics displayed by these plays, however, are equally evident in the plays of other nations of the modern world. The theater belongs by hereditary right to the people,<sup>3</sup> and

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 1090.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 1098.

<sup>3</sup>Dr. Jaime Torres-Bodet, "Message from the Director-General of UNESCO," World Theatre, Vol. I, No. 1 (1951), p. 41.

its educative potential exists for all peoples within the theatrical institution of their respective society. "It is incumbent on the dramatist . . . to be prophet, dreamer, and interpreter of the racial dream."<sup>1</sup>

The reader interested in a comprehensive discussion of the theatrical institution in various nations of the world is referred to the bibliographical listing of International Theatre by John Andrews and Ossia Trilling. The book presents a general survey of the dramatic and theatrical conditions in England and the British Commonwealth, France, the Union of Socialist Soviet Republics, Germany, Czechoslovakia, Italy, Poland, Yugoslavia, the low countries of Europe, and the Scandanavian countries.

Regardless of race or nation, ". . . the best drama brings its contributions and suggestions towards a philosophy of life, and in its particular sphere, may be of more effective service for good than either theology or pedagogy."<sup>2</sup> Within the society of each nation of the modern world, the theater has the potential to be an educative force, operative within the realms of religious thought, social thought and custom, and intellectual stimulation.

The following statement by Dr. Jaime Torres-Bodet, director-general of the United Nations Educational, Scientific,

<sup>1</sup>Anderson, op. cit., p. 56.

<sup>2</sup>Balmforth, The Ethical and Religious Value of the Drama, p. 5.

and Cultural Organization for 1951, summarizes the content of the foregoing discussion of the theater as it transmits cultural heritage and as it operates as an educative force in the modern world; his statement also serves to introduce the final concept treated in Chapter IV, that of the theater as a medium for increasing international understanding: "The theater is the most effective of cultural media, the living body of education, and one of the surest instruments of international understanding."<sup>1</sup>

The Modern Theater as a Medium for  
Increasing International Understanding

The eternal dream of "peace on earth, good will toward men" is as prevalent an ideal in the twentieth century world as it was in Biblical days. Ultimate peace between nations and true brotherhood between men may be a Utopian concept, but partial fulfillment of this universal goal can be realized through increased international understanding.

The effective application of those principles which increase international understanding and further the cause of world peace is dependent upon an instructed world citizenry.<sup>2</sup>

The educators tell us that the purpose of education is to make good citizens and to prepare the individual to gain an honest livelihood, develop culturally, and appreciate the good things inherited from the past. To

<sup>1</sup>Torres-Bodet, loc. cit.

<sup>2</sup>John Eugene Harley, International Understanding: Agencies Educating for a New World (Stanford University, California: Stanford University Press, 1931), p. vii.

these objectives must now be added that of world citizenship, . . . or the place of the individual and his nation with respect to the citizens of other countries of the world.<sup>1</sup>

Increased international understanding, a heightened rapport between members of the world community, is a function of the educative process. "The new world now to be built is a world where civilizations shall be protected against further catastrophes by international understanding. And the builder of this new world must be education."<sup>2</sup>

Previous discussion has established that the theatrical institution is an educative force; as such the theater is a medium which assumes a role in the promotion of increased international understanding in the modern world. "If anything is international, it is the theatre: in meaning, appeal, and communication."<sup>3</sup>

Modern existence has thrown many civilizations into close contact, and at the moment the overwhelming response to this situation is nationalism and racial snobbery. There has never been a time when civilization stood more in need of individuals who are genuinely culture-conscious, who can see objectively the socially conditioned behavior of other peoples without fear and recrimination. . . . We fail to see the relativity of cultural habits, and we remain debarred from much profit and enjoyment in our human relations with peoples of different standards. . . .<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 6.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. ix. Foreward by Paul Mantoux.

<sup>3</sup>Leota Diesel, "Theatre, U.S.A.," Theatre Arts, Vol. XLIII, No. 2 (February, 1959), p. 47.

<sup>4</sup>Ruth Benedict, Patterns of Culture (New York: The New American Library of World Literature, 1958), pp. 9-10.

The theater, as a medium transmitting social heritage and illuminating cultural concepts, can be a force for increased international understanding.

Dramas representing present-day social and cultural situations also serve the cause of international understanding. The goal of understanding the peoples of the world and the struggles of modern life is approached by the theater as a reflection of contemporary life; this is a value of looking at life through drama.<sup>1</sup>

Enlightened people all over the world are becoming more and more conscious of the important part the theatre can play in the promotion of international understanding and good will through dramas which give an insight into the lives and customs of men in all parts of the world.<sup>2</sup>

The theatrical contribution to increasing international understanding is a concept accepted universally. The motto of the Little Theatre of Bulawayo, South Africa, implies this idea: "Drama in its portrayal of Truth and Beauty is a potent factor in establishing the Brotherhood of Man."<sup>3</sup> This same theme is reiterated in a statement by American actress Helen Hayes:

The theatre can be so effective in carrying the message of humanity in making men all over the world see each other not as alien members of strange countries, but as fellow human beings who share the same hopes, the same handicaps, and even the same mistakes.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Lydia Glover Deseo and Hulda M. Phipps, Looking at Life Through Drama (New York: The Arlington Press, 1931), p. 7.

<sup>2</sup>"Theatre, U.S.A.," Theatre Arts, Vol. XLII, No. 9 (September, 1958), p. 60, quoting Governor George Docking of Kansas.

<sup>3</sup>Diesel, loc. cit., p. 49.

<sup>4</sup>"Theatre, U.S.A.," loc. cit., p. 58.

The nature of the theatrical entity as an educative force active in increasing international understanding is summarized in the following statement by Theodore Komisarjevsky:

And no geographic blockade of fortresses, barbed-wire entanglements, barrages of poison gas, passports or customs, are strong enough to prevent the spread of ideas between nations through the medium of the theatre.<sup>1</sup>

Consideration will be given to specific examples of the theatre's contributions in the field of international understanding.

International exchange of theatrical performances has a long history: Italian comedians performed in France, England, and Spain in the sixteenth century; Spanish actors visited Mexico as early as 1597; English comedians were presented in German theaters in the late 1500's; German productions were featured attractions in Russian cities in the early 1600's; Floridor's French acting company was a London event in 1635.<sup>2</sup> The exchange of theatrical talent between nations is still a factor in the dramatic picture of the world: the Comédie Française, the first-ranking national theatre of France, presented dramas of Molière in New York City in 1955.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Komisarjevsky, op. cit., p. 3.

<sup>2</sup>Isan Kyrle Fletcher, "The International Conference on Theatre History, 1955," Educational Theatre Journal, Vol. VII, No. 2 (May, 1955), p. 117.

<sup>3</sup>Maurice Valency, "The Comic Spirit on the American Stage," Theatre Arts, Vol. XLII, No. 9 (September, 1958), p. 21.

Established in 1920, the Théâtre National Populaire carries the banner of French theater to other countries of the world;<sup>1</sup> this group performed in the United States during the 1958 season.

During the first season of The Theatre of Nations in Paris in 1957, eighteen countries presented plays representative of their national theater. "The Theatre of Nations is one successful event in the effort to make known one country to the other through the arts of the theatre."<sup>2</sup>

Numerous international conferences have been held relating to the theatrical art. Eighteen countries participated in the 1955 International Conference on Theatre History held in London under the auspices of the Society for Theatre Research. "The study of theatrical history has been recognized as an important element in the investigation and appreciation of the cultural developments of the past."<sup>3</sup>

Forty-eight nations were allotted specific days during the 1958 World's Fair held in Brussels, Belgium, to present cultural events. Among the theatrical offerings were productions by the Comédie Française, the Schauspielhaus of Zurich, and the Moscow Art Theatre.<sup>4</sup> To illustrate what is indigenous

<sup>1</sup>Rosamond Gilder, "The T.N.P. for the U.S.A.," Theatre Arts, Vol. XLII, No. 9 (September 1958), p. 11.

<sup>2</sup>Gilder, "Ten Years of I.T.I.", p. 6.

<sup>3</sup>Fletcher, loc. cit., p. 114.

<sup>4</sup>Leota Diesel, "Festival Bill of Fare," Theatre Arts, Vol. XLII, No. 5 (May, 1958), p. 20.

to American culture in the arts, the United States contingent presented the Yale University production of J.B., the musical comedy Carousel by Richard Rodgers and Oscar Hammerstein II, and the Roosevelt drama Sunrise at Campobello, by Dore Schary.<sup>1</sup>

Festivals of the dramatic arts are held throughout the world. The Shakespearian Festival at Stratford-on-Avon is perhaps the most well-known annual theater festival; there are, however, many others. The Malvern Festival in England was begun in 1929 and is an annual fortnight of dramatic works dedicated to George Bernard Shaw.<sup>2</sup> The Theater Festival held in Moscow in 1935 presented simultaneously the best works of the State Theatre, the Children's Theatre of Young Spectators, the Jewish Theatre, the musical theater of Nemerovitch-Danilchenko, the second Moscow Art Theatre, the Realist Theatre, and the Gorki which is the first Moscow Art Theatre.<sup>3</sup> The Abbey Theatre in Dublin sponsored the 1935 Festival of Irish Drama which included productions of different plays and lectures and discussions on theatrical art.<sup>4</sup> The Pasadena Playhouse in the United States holds an annual summer festival which continues for eight weeks and presents outstanding dramas.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Lewis Funk, "Brussels Bound," Theatre Arts, Vol. XLII, No. 5 (May, 1958), p. 88.

<sup>2</sup>W. M. McGlashan and John Andrews, "Festival in the Theatre," International Theatre, edited by John Andrews and Ossia Trilling (London: Purnell and Sons, Ltd., 1949), p. 191.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., pp. 190-191.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p. 191.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid.

Two of the most prominent festivals of the arts which feature theatrical works are the Salzburg Festival, which is an annual event of thirty-five years duration, and the International Festival of Music, Drama, and Art in Edinburgh.<sup>1</sup>

International understanding is increased through the theatrical medium in diverse ways: the international exchange of theatrical performances, such international groups as the Theatre of Nations in Paris, conferences on dramatic arts, theatrical performances by participating nations at the World's Fair, and the numerous international festivals of dramatic arts. The most vital force in the modern theatrical world which contributes to increasing international understanding, however, is the International Theatre Institute.

The International Theatre Institute ". . . is the organized expression of international co-operation in the theatre."<sup>2</sup> The idea of an international organization for the theatrical art was first conceived in 1921 when Léon Bourgeois presented a proposal to this effect before the League of Nations.<sup>3</sup> The League created the International Committee on Intellectual Co-operation which in 1926 became the International Institute of Intellectual Co-operation; this organization functioned until the advent of the Second World War, serving as a

<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 188.

<sup>2</sup>J. B. Priestley, "World Reviews: The I.T.I., A Personal View," World Theatre, No. 0, Introductory issue (1950), p. 43.

<sup>3</sup>J. Clifford King, "The International Theatre Institute," International Theatre, edited by John Andrews and Ossia Trilling (London: Purnell and Sons, Ltd., 1949), p. 182.

center for artistic and intellectual exchange between nations. A branch of this group was the Société Universelle du théâtre which held its first conference in 1927 and continued in operation until 1939.

The first suggestion for the creation of an international institute for theatrical art was made at a meeting of the UNESCO sub-commission on Arts and Sciences, attended by such theater people as Archibald MacLeish, Francois Mauriac, and J. B. Priestley. This group, believing that "... the theatre was obviously a powerful means of fulfilling the cultural and educational aspirations of large groups of people throughout the world,"<sup>1</sup> unanimously passed a resolution to call a meeting of interested people. This proposal led to the Paris meeting of Theatre Experts in July, 1947, attended by playwrights, writers on the theater, actors, producers, directors, et cetera from representative world nations. This meeting was the origin of specific plans for the creation of the International Theatre Institute.

The first meeting of the International Theatre Institute was held in Prague in June, 1948. Eight countries signed the original charter and attended this first conference; the 1958 conference was attended by delegates from thirty-three participating member countries.<sup>2</sup> The annual conference of the Institute meets in a different city each year; theatrical

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 181.

<sup>2</sup>Gilder, "Ten Years of I.T.I.," p. 2.

exhibitions and festivals are arranged to coincide with the annual conferences.<sup>1</sup> Each participating country has established a center for International Theatre Institute activities within the respective country; the United States center is the American National Theatre and Academy. "Through the American National Theatre and Academy, the International Theatre Institute, and UNESCO itself, the American theatre is attempting to do its modest share toward building a world organization dedicated to peace and the freedom in which alone the creative arts can flourish."<sup>2</sup>

The charter of the International Theatre Institute states the purpose of the organization as: "To promote international exchange in the arts . . . and in this manner to advance the mutual understanding of peoples. . . ." <sup>3</sup> A more complete statement of purpose has been presented as:

In the present struggle of all men of good will toward international understanding and co-operation, the efforts of the diplomatists are not sufficient. Each and every one of us must do all in our power to weave a strong fabric of common interests uniting us to our fellows in other countries.<sup>4</sup>

The varied functions of the International Theatre Institute include: conducting international theater conferences and exhibits, co-ordinating exchange programs among the

<sup>1</sup>King, op. cit., p. 186.

<sup>2</sup>Rosamond Gilder, "Art and Industry, the U.S. Theatre Today," World Theatre, No. 0, Introductory issue (1950), p. 31.

<sup>3</sup>King, op. cit., p. 183.

<sup>4</sup>Rosamond Gilder, Llewellyn Rees, and René Hainaux, "Editorial," World Theatre, No. 0, Introductory issue (1950), p. 1.

major theater centers of the world, assisting theatrical companies in overcoming travel difficulties, sponsoring translations of plays, assisting in the production of new plays, compiling reports and making these available to interested nations, publishing universally usable theatrical books such as The International Dictionary of Stage Terms, and publishing the quarterly World Theatre magazine. The various activities of the International Theatre Institute unite to provide, ". . . multiple exchanges in the international domain of art and the universal community of intellectual delights and interests."<sup>1</sup>

The world-wide International Theatre Celebration, formerly International Theatre Month, is an activity furthering the aims and ideals of the International Theatre Institute. The purpose of this celebration is to provide a salute to world understanding.<sup>2</sup> The celebration is observed by the production of plays of other nations by professional, educational, community, children's, and church theater groups. Each year the drama of a particular country provides the theme of the month: 1958 emphasis was on plays of Asia, 1959 on plays by Latin and Central American authors, and 1960 will be devoted to plays of Russia.

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<sup>1</sup>René Hainaux, "Editorial," World Theatre, Vol. I, No. 2 (1951), p. 1.

<sup>2</sup>Diesel, "Theatre, U.S.A.," p. 47.

The purpose of the International Theatre Celebration to increase international understanding is realized as theater groups are:

. . . encouraged to present works of a particular country or area that may be quite unknown to them, and by so doing they further understanding and appreciation of that nation's culture and way of life.<sup>1</sup>

The values of the International Theatre Celebration are implied in the following quotation of the program notes of the Bradford Civic Playhouse, West Riding of Yorkshire, England, during that theater's observance of the celebration:

We hope that our presentation . . . will increase awareness of the fact that in drama we have an instrument which, common to all nations, can be used to promote friendship and unity of purpose between the peoples of the world.<sup>2</sup>

Herschel L. Bricker, United States chairman for the International Theatre Celebration for 1959, indicates the long-range values of the observance in the following statement:

A given production of a play about a small segment of the social order of any nation may seem separately unimportant; but, over the years, an accumulation of emphasis, through doing works of other nations, is bound to have an eventual influence toward bringing about world understanding.<sup>3</sup>

The foregoing discussion has presented the potential of the theater as an educative force increasing international

<sup>1</sup>Ibid.

<sup>2</sup>Alice Griffin, "Theatre, U.S.A.," Theatre Arts, Vol. XLII, No. 3 (March, 1958), p. 53.

<sup>3</sup>Diesel, "Theatre, U.S.A.," p. 48.

understanding in the modern world as this is exemplified by the activities of the International Theatre Institute and the observance of the International Theatre Celebration.

### Summary

Chapter IV has embraced a study of the theater as an educative force in the modern world. The first consideration was of the values derived from a study of theatrical history. An insight into, an understanding of, and an appreciation for the cultures of past eras was presented as integral facets of continuing education. A study of theatrical history provides modern man with a heightened insight into his contemporary cultures. The theater was shown to exist as an educative force in the modern world by virtue of the educational value of its history and heritage.

A second consideration of Chapter IV was of educational impact of the modern theater through plays with religious connotations, social implications, and intellectual stimulation. These three concepts were illustrated by the analyzation of three modern plays; J.B., Waiting for Lefty, and Death of a Salesman. The educational values embodied in these American plays were discussed as inherent to modern plays of all nations of the world.

The final consideration of Chapter IV was of the theater as a medium for increasing international understanding. The role of the educational processes in establishing inter-

national rapport was shown to be existent within the theatrical medium. Various international theater activities were discussed; special emphasis was placed on the International Theatre Institute and the annual International Theatre Celebration.

Chapter V serves to summarize the major aspects of the present study and presents a final statement of conclusions.

## CHAPTER V

### SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

#### Summary of the Major Aspects of the Study

Because the right to survive and endure is granted only to that which serves man, and because the theater has existed as a part of human society since the advent of that society, the existence of the theater must be justifiable in terms of worth or service to mankind. A belief that a partial justification of the theatrical existence is to be found in the educational influence of the theater as a social institution motivated the undertaking of the present study and the stating of the problem thus: The problem embraces a study of the theater as a social institution transmitting cultural heritage and a presentation of corroborative illustrations, both past and current, of the theater's educational character.

The purposes of the study were two-fold: to affirm the hypothesis that the theater is an educative force and to present a concept of the theater as a universal social institution. The study was limited to education considered in its broadest connotation and as applicable to all peoples; to theatrical performance considered only in terms of the live dramatic presentation of literature before live audiences; and

to the use of the most representative illustrations.

A survey of research studies of a similar or related nature revealed no investigation identical with the present one. Related studies made by Krempel, Stein, McConnell, Barron, and Henderson were reviewed.

Chapter I, serving as an orientation to the present study, consisted of an extended discussion of the concepts reviewed above; in addition, a resume of the organization of the study was included.

Chapter II presented a definitive view of the theater in an attempt to establish a concrete concept of the theatrical entity. The discussion of the theater as an art culminated in the definition of theatrical art as that art which presents human experiences as an appeal to the senses through the media of actors and the stage, which reflects the history of man and the development of his thought, and which is based upon the application of the principles of aesthetic thought, skill, taste, and technique.

A consideration of the theater in a social context involved a defense of the theater as a social institution in that it adheres to the universal characteristics of a social institution; a consideration of the theater in a social context also involved the presentation of the concept that the theater is a reflection of its contemporary society in that the four factors of the theatrical entity and the social

influences on the theater mirror the era in which the theater exists.

The establishment of the theater as an educative force embodied a discussion of the educational qualities of the theater as they have enabled the theater to become a medium for educating the peoples of the historical periods in which the theater has existed, as they enable the theater to educate contemporary peoples in regard to their heritage from the past, and as they enable the theater to become a medium for education leading to increased international understanding.

Chapter II thus demonstrated the theater, society, and education to be closely inter-related, nourishing and influencing each other as they form three great branches of the tree of Man.

This definitive concept of the theatrical entity and a brief chronological summary tracing the evolution of the theater from primitive societies to the twentieth century provided a frame of reference for an enumeration in Chapter III of specific historical illustrations attesting to the influence of the theater as an educative force. The theater as an educative force was illustrated as it develops and interprets religious thought, as it establishes and supports social thought and custom, and as it enriches cultural and intellectual climate.

The close correlation between religion and the theater

was treated as it existed in the theaters of ancient Greece and of the Middle Ages and as it has existed in the theater since the medieval period.

The theater as an educative force establishing and supporting social thought and custom was examined. The theater as it molds public opinion was illustrated by the recurring dramatic themes of war and of politics. Comedy, in the forms of social comedy and the comedy of manners, was cited as the theatrical device most influential in the portrayal of social norms and standards of behavior. The theater's effectuation of social change was analyzed as social attitudes have been altered and social legislation has been hastened by the theatrical treatment of three particular social conditions: the exploitation of labor, social injustices toward women, and the existence of a privileged social class.

The final consideration of the educational influence of the theater indicated that the nature of the theater as an artistic and a literary form inevitably results in the enrichment of the cultural and intellectual climate of the society in which the theater exists.

The concept of the theater as an educational influence illustrated in Chapter III was expanded in Chapter IV by a discussion of the theater as an educative force in the modern world.

The study of theatrical history was discussed in terms of its value to contemporary man: as it contributes to the process of continuing education and as it provides insight into the cultural heritage of modern civilizations.

The literature of the modern theater was illustrated as a medium of education in American society, the educational implications inherent in plays of the American theater being typical of those in all modern cultures. The modern verse drama J. B. was analyzed with respect to its religious connotations. The modern play possessing social implications was represented by Waiting for Lefty. Intellectual stimulation provided by modern drama was illustrated by the psychological inquiry of Death of a Salesman.

The modern theater, because of its educational impact, functions as a medium for increasing international understanding. Specific contributions of the theater to understanding among the nations of the modern world were discussed: the international exchange of theatrical performances, international theater groups like the Theatre of Nations in Paris, inter-nation conferences on dramatic arts, theatrical presentations by the participating nations at the 1958 World's Fair, and the many international festivals of the dramatic arts. Particular emphasis was placed on the influence of the International Theatre Institute and the International Theatre Celebration.

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