

1923

America and the new movement in the theatre

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BOSTON UNIVERSITY

GRADUATE SCHOOL

Thesis

AMERICA AND THE NEW MOVEMENT IN THE THEATRE

Submitted by

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(A.B., Yankton College, 1918)

In partial fulfillment of requirements for
the degree of Master of Arts

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AMERICA AND THE NEW MOVEMENT
IN THE THEATRE

The new movement in the theatre is of comparatively recent origin. Though there were here and there isolated instances of innovations before this time, twenty-five years would easily compass these activities; indeed, the large, outstanding strides have been made within practically a decade.

Conditions Giving Rise to the New Movement

When the present great period of human progress was entered upon, the theatre seems to have been the only activity of life neglected. Traditions of society, school and church were assailed and overturned, but the conventions of the theatre were unchallenged and the "art" of the play-house plodded on at will in its rut of stagnation.

But once the movement was started, it has become within these few years so intense and widespread that "today there is very definite promise of such a flowering as the drama has not known since the days of Queen Elizabeth. In remarkable strides the theatre is catching up with life, and - it is quite as important, though generally forgotten - with art. Within a decade there has been infused into the old body more new blood than for three centuries before."^{1/}

^{1/} Cheney, Sheldon: The New Movement in the Theatre,
ps. 13 and 14

The new movement has literally taken by storm the theatres of Germany and Russia, has affected somewhat less forcibly those of France and Great Britain, and within the last eight years has become a dominating factor in the serious theatre of America.

What It Is

To define this new movement of the dramatic world is not a simple or an easy thing. Drama is too intensely human to permit of close definition. Kenneth MacGowan likens the new movement to a stream of theory and effort, its source not found in any one mind, and its course cut ceaselessly by cross-currents, and "muddied by alien waters."^{1/} The new movement may be summed up, however, as follows: the elimination of realism from stage settings; the birth of a new type of play to take the place of the old realistic drama; the application of the principles of design to the art of the theatre; the adaptation to the use of the theatre of every modern invention of color and light; the minimizing of the spoken word in its application to forms of fantasy and symbolism.

The essence of the new movement may be summed up in the words, change and experimentation. Traditional forms are being broken down and replaced by new standards and new forms, less restricted and more beautiful. In only one phase has it reached anything nearing completion and perfection, that phase being the development of a technique of production, called the new stagecraft.

^{1/}

MacGowan, Kenneth: The Theatre of Tomorrow, p.13

Its Three Aspects

When such great leading figures as Gordon Craig and John Galsworthy, as Max Reinhardt and Brieux are at opposite views on this question, it is not surprising that a clear and definite summary of the new movement is difficult. Through all the confusion and varying points of view, however, and in all the transformations and changes taking place, two rather clear-cut lines of progress may be seen: first, "the attempt to reach back to an art that is typically theatric, and at the same time aesthetic," and, second, "The attempt to develop the existing drama to a form more typically dramatic, and, at the same time, social and indirectly intellectual."^{1/} In other words, the first line of progress is the development of an art of the theatre that is "visual and decorative and that appeals primarily to the outward senses" and the second is the development of an "intensive drama dependent upon character-development and development of idea through story, and appealing to the emotions and intellect."^{1/} The first development finds its expression in the so-called "aesthetic" drama, and the second takes form in the intensive drama of emotion and thought. Forming the fusion point of these two is gradually evolving a third development, which is called the "re-theatralizing" of the drama. It is the attempt to bring the entire art of the theatre into a more perfect relation with the limitations of the stage, and to produce a stagecraft that will provide

^{1/}

Cheney, Sheldon: The New Movement in the Theatre, p.15

natural and beautiful settings for plays either aesthetic or psychological in nature. The lines of effort of the leaders of these two extreme schools are in rather opposite directions, but there is promise that the two may be fused and synthesized in this third development, and that there will be born an art of the theatre as different from that of the nineteenth century as the present is different from that of the Greek world.

The Aesthetic Drama

The leaders of the aesthetic theatre movement are Gordon Craig of England, Max Reinhardt of Germany and Leon Bakst of Russia. They have expressed their theories in the form of the marionette drama, the mimo-drama, and the dance-drama, and less directly in a revival of pageantry.

The aesthetic theatre movement came as a reaction from two false extremes at which the art of the theatre had arrived: the one was a slavish realism and naturalism that was totally lacking in art or beauty; and the other was a hollow and artificial form of dramatic structure, shallow and lifeless. It is the most extreme of the reactions from the condition of stagnation that was typical of the theatre of the 19th Century. It is the result of a dream of an art of the theatre that would be true to all the basic principles of art in a unified whole, appealing primarily to the eye. The aesthetic drama is impressionistic rather than realistic, and makes its appeal through its sensuous elements of beauty rather than through plot or story. The realm of its subject matter is entirely in the imaginative world and far removed

from the present. Action, music, and setting are united in perfect harmony.

Gordon Craig

Gordon Craig, artist and director of staging, is the initiator and chief figure in the aesthetic theatre movement. As an artist, he came early to a realization of the almost total lack of art in the stage profession. His discovery that the word "theatre" originally meant a "place for seeing" brought to him the vision of an art of the theatre that should be entirely visual. In the light of this new definition of "theatre," he interpreted the "action" of drama to be that of the physical body, making a visual appeal, rather than to action in the sense of story development. And this interpretation of action as bodily movement is the essence of the whole aesthetic theory. The aesthetic drama is typically theatric and only incidentally dramatic. While the new aesthetic drama may not be the truest art of drama, Gordon Craig is right in his claim that it is the truest art of the theatre.

In order to present a dramatic production that would be unified and harmonious, Gordon Craig felt that there must be one supreme creative mind designing and directing every phase of the production. This one artist-director must write the play, design the setting, costumes and lighting, and train the actors. With such a conception in mind, the practical application came logically in the drama of the super-marionette. In this form of the aesthetic drama, wooden figures are substituted for living actors, and thus the

control of the director is extended to the slightest motion of the actors themselves.

The art of the puppet theatre, which had once been a much-loved and beautiful entertainment, had degenerated into such forms as the slap-stick Punch-and-Judy shows, but Gordon Craig and his co-workers have succeeded in causing a revival of the ancient puppet art in accordance with the principles conceived by Craig. There is acted a simple and rather elemental theme, making its appeal to the senses by the harmonious blending of movement, lighting and setting.

The super-marionette drama has been hotly criticized, especially by American dramatic critics and artists. The American, however, is naturally biased against this form of entertainment, a degraded form of this type being the only examples in the country. The toy theatre holds a large place in the lives of German children and all through Europe the higher class puppet shows are entirely comparable to the regular theatre in the place of esteem and patronage they are given by the theatre public. Not only the theatre public, but such authors as Arthur Symons, Anatole France and Maurice Maeterlinck speak enthusiastically of this form of entertainment.

Since the revival of interest in marionettes, many puppet theatres have been established in Europe in the past three or four years. Perhaps the best known of these is the "Marionetten-Theatre Münchner Künstler," which is designed especially for this sort of production. Clayton Hamilton,

the American dramatic critic, who was in 1912 calling Craig's ideas mad, after attending in 1913 a production at this theatre, wrote as follows: "I became so absorbed that I lost all sense of the puppets as puppets. The acting was less wooden than that of many of our so-called artists. This may lead us to wonder whether Mr. Gordon Craig was quite as insane as many people thought him when he suggested that the drama of the future should be presented not by the ordinary human actor, but by a sort of super-puppet.....Certain it is that such well-endowed puppets are less likely to obscure the original intention of an author than such crude and bungling actors as we often meet with in our theatres."

Gordon Craig is a dreamer and a theorist rather than a practitioner. He has much of the poet in him that dislikes the sensational. His aim is rather to reach the deeper spiritual nature through a quiet and harmonious appeal to the senses. While Craig is a man of the theatre, that he is not "master of the theatre" is revealed in the fact that he has not had a theatre under his control these twenty years. There has not been hearty response to his work either by the British public or patrons of art. German managers offered him ample opportunity for cooperation, but Craig was not able to "develop the patience that understands lesser men and slowly and painstakingly bends them to its desires. One gathers that the creative impulse could not drive itself through the practical theatre to proper expression..... He cannot hold his gigantic conception of the theatre with the

grip of a Michelangelo or a Leonardo.....Only Duse and Stanislavsky have succeeded in enlisting Craig's aid."^{1/}

Notwithstanding, Craig's contribution to the art of the theatre has been immense. The revival of the puppet theatre is not the greatest contribution made by him. In perfecting the marionette drama he has conceived and carried out principles that are not only the very essence of the aesthetic drama, but which apply to almost every production of the theatre of whatever phase.

Max Reinhardt

While to Craig must be given the credit for re-creating the art of pantomime, now called the "mimo-drama," and for making its perfection possible, we find the most typical expression of the new aesthetic movement in the work of Professor Max Reinhardt of Germany. While Craig is the great theorist, Reinhardt is the great practitioner. Reinhardt has been amazingly successful practically and commercially, and has put on a very large number of varied productions in a few years, some of them extremely bizarre and sensational. By "mimo-drama" is meant wordless plays presented by living actors. "It is the drama that appeals to the senses by visual beauty of line and mass and color, and chiefly of moving human figures; that unrolls before the eye a kaleidoscopic decoration, a fluctuating pattern of sinuous body line and gorgeous costume colors before a background

^{1/}

MacGowan, Kenneth: The Theatre of Tomorrow, pps. 89 and 90

designed suggestively to heighten the pervading mood."^{1/}
 Reinhardt does not seek to appeal gently and delicately to the senses; his desire is to thrill and overwhelm the senses and grip the more surface emotions.

"Sumurun" and "The Miracle" produced by Reinhardt are the best and most typical examples of the mimo-drama thus far presented. "Sumurun" was one of the few actual aesthetic dramas that have been produced in America. While there are spots of sensationalism and a bizarre sort of realism in these two, they are true to the principles of the aesthetic drama in having a totality of conception, in the emphasis on a continuous appeal to the senses by the unified beauty of movement, dancing and setting rather than in the story growth, and in the settings. These were simple, neutral backgrounds, suggesting the mood so subtly that not the slightest attention was drawn from the actors.

In spite of his tendency toward sensationalism, Reinhardt's share and place in the aesthetic movement is second only to Gordon Craig. He has brought the mimo-drama to the public and made it commercially practical. He has accomplished more than any other man in furthering the movement started by Craig away from the old inartistic natural setting to a beautiful and suggestive setting.

Craig vs. Reinhardt

Neither Craig nor Reinhardt are complete in themselves.

^{1/} Cheney, Sheldon: The New Movement in the Theatre, p.54

They need to supplement and complement each other, the one "the bold thinker" and the other "the bold practitioner." Both are paving the way for followers who may eliminate the faults of both and incorporate the virtues of both.

The Dance Drama

The dance drama, the fourth form of aesthetic drama, is seen in its most notable expression in the Russian Ballet. Its short existence has been filled with popular favor, rapid growth and a glory that has dimmed a bit the other forms of dramatic expression. Three sources of origin may be traced; the old Russian ballet of royal nurture, the revival of aesthetic and classic dancing throughout Europe and America, and the work of Craig along the lines of decorative staging. These three elements have been enriched and blended by a group of Russian artists, and thus was evolved the dance-drama of today.

The faintest thread of a story is portrayed in dance and pantomime before a setting that suggests the mood and atmosphere of the production in every line and color. Through it all there is the accompaniment of sympathetic music. No one of the elements stands out above the other. There is a perfect synthesis of movement, setting and music.

Leon Bakst

Gordon Craig and Max Reinhardt conceived the production as taking place before a neutral background, but the Russian school, headed by Leon Bakst, the artist and designer, demands that the background be as compelling as any other

element. In the words of Bakst, "It is the day of the painter in the theatre," and he designs his colorful settings "like paintings into which the figures have not yet been painted." The setting carries back every mood and every movement of the dancers.

"If Gordon Craig is the poet of the aesthetic theatre, striving to enchant the senses and the imagination, and Max Reinhardt the theatre showman, aiming to overwhelm the senses and thrill the surface emotions, Leon Bakst is the Oriental ravishing the eye with a primitive pagan appeal.^{1/}"

Leon Bakst is the greatest of the artists and designers of the Russian Ballet and he is one of the finest colorists of the modern stage. There are other outstanding figures in the Russian school, however, who are giving fine work to the aesthetic theatre movement. Among these are the designers, Benois, Roerich, Anisfeld, and Golovine; and the directors, Diaghlev and Fokine.

Some critics have gone as far as to say that in the Russian Ballet is found the great art of the theatre. But those critics and people who have not become too intoxicated with this appealing type of entertainment, sense that the older and deeper types of drama must continue to hold the biggest place in the hearts of people, and the gorgeous dance drama should be only, as it were, "the champagne of the theatre."

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Cheney, Sheldon: The New Movement in the Theatre, p.62

And it is in something of this spirit that all the forms of aesthetic drama should be accepted, the marionette play, the mimo-drama, and the Russian Ballet. The work of Craig, Reinhardt and Bakst has brought new life and beauty to the theatre. They have revived old and beloved forms of drama and uncovered in them latent beauties hitherto undreamed of. They have had a profound influence on the art of all drama and have greatly widened its scope.

While recognizing the great place and value of the aesthetic movement and its leaders, therefore, we must still not withdraw our allegiance from the older and deeper drama of emotion and thought, whose leaders form the second extreme school.

Psychologic Drama

The term "psychologic drama" is used to cover those forms of drama which appeal to the emotions and intellect rather than to the senses. It portrays the subtle development of character and is the story of human souls. It grips the emotions and, of necessity, the audience lives with the actors every event portrayed.

The drama of emotion is not a new form, but at the time when Ibsen produced his first plays the drama of emotion was at the lowest point of decadence, devoid of all beauty, sincerity or thought. The dramatists of the new movement, in which Ibsen, Shaw and Galsworthy stand out among scarcely lesser men, have made over the old dry form into a drama of beauty and sincerity, with a true emotional appeal. Finally

to the emotional drama was added an intellectual stimulus and social meaning, and the result was a drama of thought. "When We Dead Awaken," written by Ibsen in 1899, and which Mr. E. A. Robinson calls the greatest play ever written, is a drama of this type.

History of Development of Drama of Thought

The drama of thought, which reaches through the emotions to the intellect, is typically a growth of the present period of progress. The origin of the drama of thought came as a reaction to the shallow and artificial standards of the Scribe-Sardou School on the part of the French dramatists, Augier and Dumas the younger. It found its culmination and high point in Ibsen, who is, in truth, the father of the modern drama of thought. In Germany, Russia, Scandinavia and England there was a concurrent development, a somewhat weaker movement in France, and only a feeble response in Italy, Spain and the United States.

Thus we see that the development of the drama of thought has been a world movement, felt to a greater or less extent in nearly all countries, with nearly every country contributing its outstanding leaders in the movement. In Scandinavia, where the drama of thought reached its first flower, there were Ibsen, Strindberg, and Björnson; in Russia, Tolstoy, Gorky and Chekhov; in Germany, Hauptmann, Sudermann and Wedekind; in Italy and France, Giacosa and Brieux; and in England, most notable of all contemporary groups, Shaw, Barker, Galsworthy, and others, forming the Modern English

School.

The dramatists of thought, when they faced the theatre at the end of the 19th Century, found a public demanding plays that were sweet and sentimental and conventional, with the proverbial happy ending, as, for example, Pinero's "Sweet Lavendar." Tragedy was taboo except in historical or purely imaginative subjects. The playwright was hemmed in on all sides by conventional and meaningless rules. The setting was a nightmare of inartistic "naturalism."

The revolt which came was not from the way of the old theatre, that is, through the emotions. But beyond the emotional grip these new dramatists demanded that there be food for thought. To plumb the debts of the emotions and leave nothing behind is little short of a crime, is their belief. They realize that the intellect can be stimulated only through the emotions and not by direct preachments.

"Their plays are introspective and intensive. In technique they have brought back a compactness of form that has not been known since the time of the Greeks... Their whole art is intimate and intensive rather than impersonal and extensive."^{1/}

The aesthetic theatre movement, making, as it did, a complete break from the traditional theatre, finds in its very isolation the opportunity to develop according to its own principles. The psychologic drama, on the other hand, in

^{1/} Cheney, Sheldon: "The New Movement in the Theatre," p.36

its close relation to the accepted theatre, has the constant temptation to surrender to old traditions and to the standards set by commercial considerations. There are only a very few dramatists who have not been overwhelmed by this temptation. Either their standards were lowered to meet popular demand or there has been a blind following of schools or masters. One tendency that has become more and more common is the treatment of the sordid things of life in a manner so devoid of beauty and spiritual significance that the result is a depressing, biased and ignoble picture of life. Such a type is seen in Susan Glaspell's "The Verge."

The English School of Sincerity

There are, however, a few of the newer psychologic dramatists who have reached their difficult goal. While almost every country has its contribution to make, the new intensive drama is finding its most complete and perfect development in England. In the theatre of thought the English School has made the greatest achievements and gives the most promise of any country in the world. One has only to list the names Shaw, Galsworthy, Barrie, Masefield, Barker, Bennett, Houghton and Sowerby to realize the truth of this statement.

While the English movement owes much to Ibsen, Hauptmann and Wedekind, in its essence it is the result of a rather independent attempt to be true to human nature and art. While Ibsen's sincerity and compactness of form have been accepted, he is followed by the English dramatists only in so

far as his art is universal. Just as readily they turn to Shakespeare, the Greeks, Strindberg and Brieux.

The drama of thought and the drama of emotion have developed side by side. Arthur Pinero and Henry Arthur Jones developed the drama of emotion to its highest point. Galsworthy, Shaw and Barker began just where Pinero and Jones left off and went on into the field of the drama of sincerity and of the social play.

The distinguishing characteristic of the new English drama is sincerity in every part. In fact, the English group is called "The School of Sincerity."

The theme of the new drama is usually close to contemporary life and one that is intensely human and vital. Beneath the surface story is fundamental humanitarian motive and social truth. And yet the theme is never presented apart from character.

The same sincerity is carried out in the shaping of the story. Action of the subtle psychologic type is recognized as being more dramatic than violent physical action. The drama is completed in a logical way. An improbable happy ending is not forced in merely to send the audience home happy.

In forming the dramatic structure of their plays, the English dramatists first of all seek for unity. Throughout, as an inseparable part of the play, is the rising action, which calls forth the emotional response of the audience.

There is a fine imaginative beauty and poetic insight

withal in these plays. These dramatists are realists, idealists and romanticists at once.

John Galsworthy is the most promising and typical dramatists of the new movement. With him the drama of emotion and thought are perfectly combined. His is essentially the social drama. His characterizations are individual enough to hold sympathy throughout the play, but the characters are essentially social types which give insight into a universal human problem.

Galsworthy has contributed a great number of plays to the drama of sincerity, the most typical of which are "Strife," "The Silver Box," "Justice," and "Loyalties." "Justice" was the cause of far-reaching prison reforms throughout England.

"Bernard Shaw is by far the most brilliant writer of dialogue and the most daring thinker who has come into the English theatre; but he is not at all the consummate dramatist. He is incomparable as moralist and sociological reformer, and no one has so successfully brought the theatre into the service of the social movement. But as art his work is defective. He does not realize that art carries a message through emotional experience, and not by preaching at or discussion before an audience." ^{1/} If Shaw had possessed the technique of Ibsen, he would have been a greater dramatist than Ibsen himself.

Shaw's peculiar style of writing may be traced, at least in part, to his early experiences of young manhood when much of his time was spent in addressing the people on social

^{1/} Cheney, Sheldon: The New Movement in the Theatre, p.80

questions, using a soap box or the rear of a cart as a rostrum. The penalty for an uninteresting speech was a liberal attack of missiles from the audience; consequently, the young orator used every device at his command to interest his listeners.

"Candida," "Arms and the Man," "You Never Can Tell" and "Mrs. Warren's Profession" were written before Shaw had entirely lost his dramatic sense and are perhaps his most delightful plays. In "Getting Married" and even in "Man and Superman," one of the most important plays of the new movement, the action is so retarded with philosophical and irrelevant discussion that these are plays to be read rather than acted.

"Back to Methuselah," is of especial interest. It is a collection of five argumentative pieces each from an hour to two hours in length. A legend is developed beginning with the Garden of Eden and ending in the year 31,920 A.D. "Back to Methuselah" was produced by the Theatre Guild in 1922, and the production was a disappointment even to the staunchest of Shaw admirers. "We were compelled to fall back on the vigor of thought alone, and we made the interesting discovery that vigor of thought is not like vigor of action or vigor of emotion. It does not automatically evolve a containing form and it cannot sustain the attention of that peculiar thing, the human audience, after a couple of hours."^{1/} The element which stood out most in the Guild production was the splendid

^{1/} MacGowan, Kenneth: Theatre Arts Magazine, June 1922; "Broadway at the Spring"

achievement of Lee Simonson in setting the play.

While Granville Barker is admittedly a follower of Shaw, he possesses a far better technique than Shaw. Even so, he is often guilty of irrelevancies, especially in "Madras House" and "Waste."

J. M. Barrie introduced a romantic note that had before been lacking in the drama of thought. Barrie is a law unto himself. His work ranges from sheer fantasy to irony and a treatment of the deepest phases of life. Among his works are "Peter Pan," "The Twelve Pound Look," "What Every Woman Knows" and "Half an Hour."

While Arnold Bennett belongs decidedly to the new movement, his plays have not been entirely successful from a theatric standpoint. There is too much of the novelist about Bennett. In fact, some of his plays are merely dramatizations of his earlier novels. Arnold Bennett has said and written much about the folly of studying dramatic technique, but his own plays are the best proof that such study is very essential. Notwithstanding, his plays are clever and have delightful spots.

Certain other playwrights must be included in this group of new dramatists even though the number of plays they have contributed is small. Masefield in his "Tragedy of Man," "The Faithful" and "Pompey the Great" made a rare contribution. They show the possibility of literary beauty in the drama of thought. "Hindle Wakes," written by that young dramatist who gave such promise, the late Stanley Houghton, is a fearless study of English life. "Rutherford and Son" by Githa Sowerby

is a powerful, although somewhat sombre, play.

The Irish School

While the Irish School of playwrights possesses much in common with the English School, the nationalistic element, so inherently a part of the Irish plays, in a measure sets them apart. In all the Irish plays, realism, idealism and symbolism are perfectly blended. There is a unique and charming poetic beauty about them that is unequalled anywhere. With Yeats the dramatic element is less important than the poetic element. Synge applied the poetic interpretation to everyday life and has written some of the finest plays of the present day. Lady Gregory, with her intimate portrait of Irish life, Ervine, Douglas Hyde, George Moore and Lennox Robinson have all made important contributions to the new movement. All of these playwrights are of the Abbey Theatre in Dublin.

The greatest advance in the new movement is coming not in London, but in "the provinces." Such experimental and non-commercial theatres as Miss Horniman's Repertory Theatre in Manchester and The Abbey Theatre in Dublin are doing most to develop the new English drama. The repertory theatre movement is growing rapidly and is causing increasingly good plays to be written and is producing a generation of actors capable of interpreting the drama of thought.

The Psychologic and Aesthetic Schools

There is mutual intolerance between the followers of the aesthetic theatre and followers of the psychologic or intensive drama. England has practically closed its doors

to Gordon Craig, the great exponent of the aesthetic theatre. One school sees so clearly the visual imperfections of the one type of drama and, at the same time, sees its great possibilities for beauty; and the other school fears in the aesthetic movement an influence toward a surface appeal and mere sensuous attraction. In point of fact, however, the aesthetic theatre and the best of the psychologic drama hold in common many things. Both are reactions from the old and inartistic forms. Both are founded, though in contrasted ways, on the basic principles of art, - simplicity, unity and beauty. Both are arts of the theatre, though the aesthetic is more typically theatric and the psychologic more typically dramatic. By "theatric" is meant that "which is adapted for the purpose of the theatre;" ^{1/} by "dramatic" that which is creative of emotional response." ^{2/} The differences are to be found not in basic principles of art, but in aim and emphasis. There is no reason why the lover of drama cannot enjoy and appreciate both forms and why the two cannot be mutually beneficial.

Re-theatralizing of the Drama

To this end and forming the fusion point of the aesthetic and psychologic dramas, is the third development of the new movement in the theatre, known as the "re-theatralizing of the drama." The re-theatralizing of the drama has been the attempt to apply the decorative principles of the aesthetic theatre to psychologic drama and to perfect the visual elements of the forms of drama that are least theatric. The result has been the creation of a new stage-craft, which totally

^{1/} and ^{2/}

discredits the old naturalistic settings and enables plays of every kind to have a setting which is beautiful, which is in keeping with the spirit of the production, and in no way detracts from the plot.

These artistic principles of staging were very rarely applied until Gordon Craig's influence made itself felt. At the present time, however, there is a definite and widespread movement in this direction, although certain men of the theatre, such as David Belasco in America and Sir Herbert Tree in England, have clung to the old naturalistic standards of production with unrelenting tenacity.

Reinhardt has not confined his efforts to the mimodrama. He has entered the field of emotional and intellectual drama, such as plays of Shakespeare, and by cutting dialogue and rearranging the scenes he so subordinates the story element to the visual element that the result is a psychologic drama staged with the visual appeal uppermost. In many cases he has been able to bring through the visual appeal new vitality and beauty to certain plays which had never before reached their full possibilities. When Gordon Craig produces a psychologic play, on the other hand, he merely stages it in a beautiful and artistic way, preserving the author's own meaning. But when Max Reinhardt has finished "retheatralizing" a play it may be wonderfully effective, but that it should bear any semblance of its original self is a secondary consideration.

Probably no country has as many directors and designers

who understand and apply these principles as Germany. The work of Max Reinhardt, Ottomar Starke and Georg Fuchs is having a great influence on the whole field of drama.

The movement, however, is by no means confined to Germany. The re-theatralizing of drama is being carried out in Moscow by Constantin Stanislavsky, whose production of "The Blue Bird" in 1908-09 was a rare achievement of poetic charm and decorative appeal; in Paris by Jacques Rouché; in Budapest by Alexander Hevesi; and in England by Gordon Craig and Granville Barker, although England is very loathe to respond to this phase of the new movement in the theatre. The work of these men is influencing every phase of theatre activity. They are applying the principles of unity and simplicity to the drama in its entirety.

The New Stagecraft

While the new stagecraft is the result of the aesthetic and "re-theatralizing" movements, which have originated practically since 1900, as early as 1808 a German critic, August Wilhelm Schlegel, voiced a theory of stagecraft surprisingly similar to that advocated many years later by Appia, Craig and others, in which he pleaded for simplicity and suggestiveness. The same ideas caused Tieck and Immermann in 1840 and Perfall and Savitts in 1890 to construct Shakespearean stages of utter simplicity and beauty. The German artist, Anselm Feuerbach, wrote in 1880: "I hate the modern theatre because my sharp eye always sees through the cardboard and the rouge. From the bottom of my soul I hate the misdeeds committed

in the name of decoration and everything that belongs thereto....The true work of art has enough power within itself to make its situations visible and real without unworthy artificial means, which violate all the canons of art. Unobtrusive suggestion is what is needed, not bewildering effects." ^{1/}

How like Gordon Craig this reads! The first constructive theorist and practitioner, however, was Adolphe Appia. His first book of theory was printed in French in 1893. Following this he made sketches to illustrate his theories, the most famous being settings for Wagner's operas. In 1899 he published in German his second volume, "Die Musik und die Inszenierung." This book had a strong influence in Germany, but almost no one reads it now. He is too difficult and thorough to be easily understood. Yet his theories went to the very heart of the stage problem and he anticipates and foreshadows the revolution which was to come.

Appia did little in actual producing, and although his work is still having a stimulating effect, we must turn to Gordon Craig to find the great pioneer figure and genius of the new stagecraft. He first showed the hopelessness of the naturalistic setting and the value of suggestion. His experimentation has passed through various stages, from the use of simple hangings to his new folding screen setting, but through it all he has been true to the principles of simplicity and imaginative suggestion. Craig's largest contribution has been in connection with the aesthetic theatre movement, but

^{1/} MacGowan, Kenneth: The Theatre of Tomorrow, ps.15 and 16; quoting Adolphe Appia

his influence has penetrated to every corner of the theatre world.

The theories of Gordon Craig have been carried out by Max Reinhardt to a greater extent than by Craig himself. While not an artist, Reinhardt has done more than any other man to bring the new stagecraft into the commercial theatre. Reinhardt "brought his more pungent and vigorous realism to a wedding with the newer ideas of Craig and Appia" in his Kleines and Neues theatres and later in his Kammerspielhaus. By 1905 he was fully incorporating the new methods of staging in his productions.

In German theatres, paralleling the growth of Reinhardt in carrying out the principles of the new stagecraft, were such producers as Georg Fuchs and Paul Schlenther, the artist-directors Carl Hagemann and Max Martersteig, and a score of designers, among whom may be mentioned Ernst Stern, Julius Klein, Ottomar Starke and Emil Orlik.

Whereas Gordon Craig limited his stagecraft to poetic and historic drama, Max Reinhardt and his German co-workers have extended it to cover the most realistic of plays, and have proved its great effectiveness in all types of plays.

Speaking generally, the theatres of England and America are twenty years behind those of Germany in equipment, which fact partly accounts for the slow progress in the new stagecraft which has been made in these countries. Professor Max Littmann, the German architect, has revolutionized the whole concept of theatre and stage construction with the extension of the principles of dignity and simplicity to the theatre

building, at the same time insisting that the stage be equipped with the best setting and lighting facilities.

Outside of Germany, directors and designers who are practicing the new stagecraft are rather sparsely scattered. In Russia the Moscow Art Theatre, founded in 1898 by Stanislavsky and Nyemirovich-Dantchenko, has fused, to a certain extent, its realistic tendencies with the new principles of stage setting. It has shown a readiness to experiment with new methods, shown in the production of "The Blue Bird" in 1908-09, and the invitation to Gordon Craig in 1912 to produce "Hamlet" with his screen-settings. Yet its chief allegiance is to realism.

In Paris Jacques Rouché was the first great interpreter and exponent of the new stagecraft, his Théâtre des Arts being founded in 1907. Before him came lesser men, such as Rivière, Fort, and Lugné-Poë, and after him the great Jacques Copeau.

In America the new stagecraft has been rather generally limited to the experimental and university theatres and to imported plays, although the New York Managers Winthrop Ames and Arthur Hopkins are tending more and more in this direction. Robert Edmund Jones, Lee Simonson, Sam Hume, Norman Bel-Geddes, and Irving Pichel, and a score of others are designing settings in harmony with the principles of the new stagecraft, and the general acceptance of artistic principles of stage mounting is inevitable.

These are the men who have created the theory and technique of the new stagecraft and are putting its principles into practical application. What, then, is this theory and

technique they have evolved?

There is a tendency to two extremes in staging a play: negligence of setting and over-emphasis of setting. The first occurs when the playwright has most to do with the staging, and the second when the stage designer has the upper hand. The art of the theatre, however, exists in the production as a whole, with play, acting and setting blended to form one harmonious appeal. The function of the setting is that of the picture frame, which clothes the action "as a perfect gown clothes a beautiful woman - in absolute harmony with her special type of beauty, inconspicuously heightening her human loveliness rather than calling attention from it to the details of dress. The average setting is merely a shabby covering for the body of drama, or else a dress that outshines its wearer."^{1/}

The fundamental principles of the new stagecraft are: the setting must be an integral part of the play and in harmony with the essential spirit of the entire production; and it must be unobtrusive and concentrate attention on the actors. These principles are carried out in practice by "suggestion rather than by naturalistic delineation, by simple design rather than by multiplicity and intricacy of detail, by reticence of touch rather than by lavishness."^{2/} The appeal is to the inner emotions rather than to eye and ear. The old method of setting a play was to leave nothing to the

^{1/} Cheney, Sheldon: The New Movement in the Theatre, p.123

^{2/} " " " " " " " " p.124

imagination. The attempt was to secure material illusion by multiplication of naturalistic detail. On the other hand, the new method of setting a play is to leave everything possible to the imagination. The aim is to secure imaginative illusion by simplification and symbolic suggestion.

How, then, do the new stage designers carry out the application of their theories?

The new settings are designed to be natural enough not to seem bare or too conventionalized, but not so natural as to cause comparison between them and a literal exactness. "An attempt at exact reproduction challenges the audience to comparison....If a Child's restaurant in all its detail is offered, it remains for the audience to recall its memory photograph of a Child's restaurant and check it up with what is shown on the stage....The result of the whole mental comparing process is to impress upon the auditor that he is in a theatre witnessing a very accurate production, only remarkable because it is not real. So the upshot of the realistic effort is further to emphasize the unreality of the whole attempt, setting, play, and all. So I submit that realism defeats the very thing to which it aspires. It emphasizes the faithfulness of unreality."^{1/} Quiet beauty and perfect taste, which are essential to unobtrusiveness, are secured through simplicity of line and mass. It requires an artist mind and hand to combine the lines and masses to produce the desired results.

^{1/} Hopkins, Arthur: How's Your Second Act, p.27

The perfect setting must also be in harmony with the mood of the play, must subtly and psychologically suggest its essential spirit. For example, a setting on a large scale suggests tragedy; emphasized horizontal lines produce the sense of repose and restfulness.

The new stagecraft permits of the use of only the absolutely essential things called for by the action. If the play demands a "period" setting, the spiritual interpretation of a time and place is expressed rather than archaeological or historic accuracy.

A radical change in materials used has been one of the results of the new stagecraft. The old painted canvas "flats," with their naturalistic representations of trees, houses, windows, and lights and shadows, have been eliminated as far as possible. Their use by the new stagecraftsmen is limited to exterior and interior walls, and when used they are painted in unbroken tint, with no objects represented on them. The furnishings required are actually present, not merely painted on.

For exterior settings the old "backcloth," with its distracting landscape scene, has given way to the "cyclorama-drop," and more recently in a few Continental theatres, to the new "cupola-horizon" or "sky dome." The object in the use of both of these is to give the illusion of distance without detracting attention from the action. The effect produced is that of vibrating light, without interference of objects, and the senses react to it as to a clear sky. The result is a

more natural effect than the most enthusiastic naturalistic advocate can secure with his ugly, wrinkled, painted canvases.

The task of the new stagecraftsman is by no means a simple one, since plays range from the modern realistic type, with unelastic requirements, to poetic drama, in which the imagination may have full sway in designing the setting. But in every type, he must be true to the underlying principles of unobtrusiveness, simplicity and suggestion. Following are given a few examples typical of the new stagecraft.

A design made by Fritz Erler for a production at the Munich Art Theatre showed the exterior of a church. There was one massive pillar, with a Gothic arch stretching half way across the stage. Before the arched opening was a standard with candles. The background was darkness, all the light being focused on the figures of the actors grouped at the foot of the pillar. The effect was one of utter simplicity, yet one of surpassing majesty, reverence and nobility. An attempt to represent naturalistically a cathedral would, within the limits of the stage, have proved an utter failure.

The palace exterior of "Sumurun," produced by Max Reinhardt in America, was represented by a flat, neutrally-toned wall, with two projections and several conventional windows to prevent monotony. Against this background the figures in their gorgeous costumes stood out sharply and decoratively.

An exterior setting often required in plays is a garden. The new stagecraft eliminates as far as possible the

beds of actual flowers and painted vistas of trees, with their distracting details. Usually a cyclorama or sky-dome is used as a background, and against it a high garden wall or trellis is placed, against which the actors stand out much as they did in the palace exterior of "Sumurun." A few pots of flowers, or one or two conventional trees in jardiniers complete the scene.

The problems connected with interior settings are not so great, because here the requirements are more conventional. The problem is rather one of simplification and artistic execution. Three principles are rather generally followed by the new designers in connection with the interiors: first, that furnished rooms beyond that in which the action takes place should not be shown and that detailed street scenes or landscapes should not be revealed through windows; second, that the wall spaces should be as unbroken as possible; and, third, that only what is absolutely essential in the nature of furnishings should be used.

For historical or poetical productions the most common setting used in the new stagecraft is a background of heavy hangings, with possibly a pillar on each side. Most of the interior scenes in Shakespeare could be more effectively acted in such a setting than if played in realistic surroundings. Believing this, Gordon Craig, at the invitation of the Art Theatre of Moscow, staged "Hamlet" at this theatre using as scenery merely cream-white screens of different shapes and sizes. These placed in varying combinations and under the changing lights suggested the atmosphere of the different

acts with great effectiveness. In a German theatre the banquet scene from "Macbeth" was played before bare walls. The grandeur of a throne room is often suggested in no other way than by simple hangings of great richness.

It is possible to produce a modern interior in accordance with these same principles. The usual representation is a modern room furnished tastefully, but with not a single unnecessary detail, the wall spaces being left as unbroken as possible. Japanese actors, true to their native artistic sense, have given some of the finest examples of this type of setting in some recent productions of Ibsen in Tokio.

Aspects of Modern Lighting

Lighting is one of the most potent agencies in the new stagecraft. Adolphe Appia's peculiar contribution to the art of the theatre was to urge the dominating place of light. The essence of his settings was atmosphere, the background being softened and united with the actor through the medium of light. His interpretation of light as the heart of staging was entirely incomprehensible to his day, and is not fully appreciated even yet, although his work anticipated the theory, practice and mechanism of modern stage lighting.

Many of the designs made by Appia are on a level with Craig's in nobility of conception. They have a beauty and dignity which place them above much of the eccentricities of the new stagecraft. In all of them, lighting is one of the most important, if not the most important, element. In writing of his setting for the forest in "Siegfried" Appia

says: "We must no longer try to create the illusion of a forest; but instead the illusion of a man in the atmosphere of a forest. When the forest trees, stirred by the breeze, attract the attention of Siegfried, we, the spectators, should see Siegfried bathed in the moving lights and shadows, and not the movement of rags of canvas agitated by stage tricks. The scenic illusion lies in the living presence of the actor. . . . An object or person takes on a plastic quality only through the light that strikes it, and the plasticity can only be of artistic value when the light is artistically handled."^{1/}

Progress in stage lighting has been very recent and very rapid. In this field, at least, America, in most cases far behind Europe in the new stagecraft, has contributed largely to the movement in the elimination of foot and overhead lights and in the employment in their place of high-powered incandescent bulbs. David Belasco, out of sympathy as he is with the new stagecraft as a whole, was the leader of electrical progress in America, followed soon by Arthur Hopkins and Robert E. Jones. Theodore Brown, after two years of extensive research in the lighting of European theatres, told an American audience that no lighting in Europe was comparable to that found in America.

Producing colored effects is still not wholly satisfactory. Munroe R. Pevear, of Boston, after much research

^{1/} Appia, Adolphe, Die Musik und die Inszenierung

has invented special lamps and lenses of great effectiveness, but these have not as yet been commercialized to any great degree. Lee Simonson is using them in his work, however, with great success.

In solving the problems of color and supplying a better substitute for the sky, Europe has gone much further than America. The Fortuny system of lighting, originated by the Venetian, Fortuny, and worked out by the General Electric Company of Berlin, consists of two elements: first, the lighting unit which throws white light upon colored silk, from which it is reflected on the stage; second, a plaster or concrete dome upon which this light finally falls and from which it is again reflected and diffused.

The Fortuny system, in somewhat modified form, has been established by Reinhardt in his Deutsches Theatre. The dome is in very wide use throughout Germany and Austria. Although it is used in some theatres in America, for the most part those of an experimental nature such as the Neighborhood Playhouse in New York City, the theatre of the Provincetown Players, and the Blythelea Theatre in Orange, New Jersey, the American commercial theatre has as yet too many practical difficulties, such as the touring system and the necessity of scenery being built to fit any stage, to permit of its general acceptance.

The dome, with or without Fortuny's reflected lighting, produces the most perfect illusion of sky that

is possible. "It is almost literally impossible for the eye to focus upon the surface of the plaster, to detect the actual depth of the sky. To all intents, the distance is infinite. And it is alive, it is luminous with light"^{1/}

A Swedish company, the Aktiebolaget Regi och Scen teknik, assisted by German experts, has perfected a new system of background and lights since the close of the Great War, known as the Ars system, which promises to be even more successful than the Fortuny system. The Ars system consists of many ingenious lights used in connection with a cyclorama of cloth, so weighted that it will not wrinkle, which reflects the light much as does plaster. It is more practicable than the dome since it is movable. The Ars system has been installed in the Royal Opera in Stockholm, the State Opera in Dresden and LaScala in Milan.

Place of the Painter in the New Stagecraft

The painter has found a large place in the new stagecraft. He has come into prominence only within the past five or six years. The Russians have been the strongest influence in bringing the contributions of great painters to the theatre. Bakst, Golovin, Roerich, Korovin, Yegoroff, Anisfeld and Benois have made brilliant achievements in this direction. The methods of these artists, that is, allegiance to the flat canvas, are, in reality, better fitted to the theatre of the past, to realism rather than to suggestion. They utilize the great canvas backdrops and tall wings of the conventional

^{1/} MacGowan, Kenneth: The Theatre of Tomorrow, p.59.

stage and place on these limited spaces their brilliant and colorful art. Miles of distant landscape, whole cathedrals, and palace gardens are represented.

The work of these painters is, however, essentially a part of the new stagecraft. In the first place, they are true to the spirit of the new stagecraft in the way they handle their perspectives. These are treated so boldly and in such an exaggerated style that there is no pretense about their conventionality. The new theatre painter "flings out walls, rafters, columns and stairs with such sweep and verve that they take on a spiritual life which triumphs over technical limitations. These backdrops arrest and fascinate, not because they suggest reality, but because they are instinct with the creative forces of a great artist."^{1/}

Not only do the designs of these painters "use perspective unrealistically;" they also are a part of the new stagecraft in that through the very exaggeration of perspective an emotional sense of the inner meaning of the play or ballet is conveyed to the audience. "In Thamar, for instance, that pantomime of the savage mountain queen who lures travellers to their death in her arms, the amazing delta of her towering walls carries an oppressive sense of her remote and mountainous power, of her hard and rocklike cruelty, almost a symbol of her passion."^{2/}

By the use of color the emotions of the actors are

^{1/} MacGowan, Kenneth: The Theatre of Tomorrow, p.70
^{2/} " " " " " " p.71

dramatized, and by the selection and arrangement of pictorial objects the essential atmosphere of the production is carried out.

The American theatre has a fine group of so-called "younger decorators," among whom are Jones, Peters, Geddes, Rosse, Simonson and Johnson, who, though painters, have become thoroughly theatre artists, because they are thinking and working in terms of the plastic stage. After all, it is true that the "painter in the theatre is justified only from the time when he ceases to be the easel artist, only when he becomes characteristically the theatre artist, thinking in terms of the theatre, of light, color, sound, movement, projection of emotion into an auditorium from a stage."^{1/}

Perhaps the latest and most extreme development of the new stagecraft is expressional formality in stage design. That is, new conventional forms and structures have been introduced on the stage in place of the old conventional backdrop and wings, or even the setting which is entirely illusional.

Expressionism

The term "expressionism" covers all those methods in modern painting by which the artist's emotion is represented rather than the object which caused it. Though in expressionism the artist may still represent a natural object, his picture is usually merely an arrangement of planes, masses or lines of color. In any case, what he attempts to express

^{1/} Cheney, Sheldon: The Painter in the Theatre: Theatre Arts Magazine, July 1922, p.192

is the emotion created in him by the object rather than a literal representation of the object itself.

The attempt to make a natural object or a shape express an emotion which is not expressed or suggested in itself but which is felt by the artist has, of course, a direct effect on the problem of setting design. The problem before the designer is to make clear this emotion to the audience by molding the natural objects and abstract shapes into forms which give the emotional reaction desired by the artist. A door as such expresses no emotion. If the emotion can be expressed by representing the opening as a distorted Gothic arch or a triangular passage, the artist designs it in this way. Before this method was known as expressionism it was called cubism, futurism or post-impressionism.

Expressionism was first applied to the art of the theatre on Christmas day, 1914, this experiment being undertaken by the Kamerny Theatre in Moscow. This little theatre, directed by Alexander Tairoff, has done some very remarkable work along the lines of expressionism. Among the productions which have been presented in the expressionistic style by this theatre are "Salome," "The Merry Wives of Windsor," "King Harlequin" and "Thamira of the Cithern." Not only were the backgrounds cubist, but the expressionism extended to costumes and acting. Artists who have designed for the Kamerny Theatre are Sudeykin, Kuznetsoff, Kalmakoff, Lyentuloff, Miganadzhian, and Natalia Gontcharova.

While the ordinary expressionistically produced plays

use no other light than that painted on the scene and provided by the usual steady stage illumination, these cubist productions in Moscow and productions by Maurice Browne in Chicago and by Dalcroze used the medium of changing color and intensity of light to reinforce the emotional reaction of the audience. While the possibilities of producing a certain emotional response in an audience by color and intensity of light are very great, theatre-goers are so used to the fixed and ordinary lights of the stage that great care must be taken or the attention of the spectators will be detracted rather than reinforced.

The first cubist production ever given in America was presented in December, 1915, one year after the inauguration of expressionism by the Kamerny Theatre, by the Philadelphia Stage Society. "Three Women," an eccentric drama of Spain, was produced before a cubist interpretation of Seville painted by Richard J. Beamish, a young artist who lost his life during the war. For his representation, Beamish used a flat backdrop and "spread across it the warm violence of the Spanish city in angular piles of reds, browns and yellows, with a bit of blue sky shattered by a leaping arch of Moorish shape."^{1/}

The next American experiment in expressionism came in February 1917, in a production by students of the Academy of Fine Arts in Philadelphia. Backgrounds of an expression-

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MacGowan, Kenneth: The Theatre of Tomorrow, p.117

istic nature were designed for this annual Artists' Masque by the young painter, Lyman Sayen, who has since died.

In 1919 Herman Rosse used cubist elements in his production of a nativity play in Chicago. One of the curtains was a symbolical representation of Herod, and one entire scene was acted before a neutral background on which the setting was projected by means of light passing through a glass plate on which the design was painted.

The designs for many of Sergei Diaghileff's Ballets Russes have been made by the cubist artists Picasso, Matisse, Larinoff and Derain. Picasso's designs for "Parade" are the most notable work of this group. To the unaccustomed eye his costumes and figures, made up as they are of wierd combinations of cylinders and pipes, appear fantastical in the extreme.

An expressionistic production of the Saint-Sæens' opera "Samson et Delilah" designed by Isaac Grünewald and directed by that energetic and radical young producer, Harold André, met with greater success than any of the cubist productions other than the Ballets Russes.

A group of artists, known as "Der Sturm" introduced a mature type of expressionism into the German theatre through a series of experimental matinees given during the summer of 1920. The artists had the advantage of having as experimental material, plays which were written especially for their purposes by Kokoschka, Hasenclever, and others.

The extreme pre-war expressionism in Germany, in which

Richard III was presented on a flight of blood-red steps, and "Much Ado About Nothing" was given before a setting of extremely bizarre trees and eccentric furniture, has given way to milder forms of expressionism, in which the aim is a severely simplified stage with only one or two objects, so shaped as to have tremendous emotional significance.

German expressionist staging has met with greatest success in two motion picture productions, "The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari" and "The Golem." In "Caligari" the expressionistic design was painted on flats, from which houses were constructed which seemed ready to topple over into the streets. The settings completely suggested the mystery of the madhouse. In "The Golem" the distorted Gothic forms produced a feeling of dismal squalor, of "houses that talk a Jewish jargon and hovels that whisper."^{1/}

A few have gone so far in the expressionist movement that they are designing scenery that will act, that will actually move and take part in the play. The expressionists of "Der Sturm" made considerable experimentation along this line. The Dutch artist, Herman Rosse, now living in America, has made some important discoveries regarding moving scenery.

The illusion of moving scenery is to be accomplished partly by changing lights and moving materials, and partly by means of designs projected by a motion picture machine. Thus a background full of life and dynamic is created and a continuous emotional picture is presented.

^{1/}

MacGowan, Kenneth: Continental Stagecraft, p.55

Since such a background naturally overshadows the actors, it is intended for a play of the aesthetic type, in which the actor is not primarily important. That the new settings often make the actor of secondary importance is a common criticism. Concerning this Rosse says: "From a purely aesthetic viewpoint the effect of this developing of the background at the expense of the actor will remake the dynamic play. Imagine beyond the proscenium a void in which planes and bodies will develop themselves in limitless gradations of color and shape in one great rhythm with the coordinating music - two-dimensional patterns in kaleidoscopic succession, and these fascinating patterns formed by the intersection of solids, darts of color across a sombre background, lines, planes, or solids, and symbols of man and surrounding nature, all emphasizing the mood of the music!"^{1/}

Thomas Wilfred, machinist, musician, and artist, has perfected in his laboratory on Long Island the "color organ" and by it Wilfred has achieved the conception of Rosse in an art entirely separate from the artificial theatre, an art of pure color and form.

"This organ may obviously be compared in many respects to the pipe organ so far as structure goes... Instead of the wind chest there are a number of sources of white light. And in this white light all possibilities of color lie, as all sounds in the wind. It is the harnessed force for all color.

^{1/}

Rosse, Herman: quoted in The Theatre of Tomorrow, pps. 121,122, by Kenneth MacGowan

This light passes through an instrument, a combination of the mechanical, electrical and optical, which is controlled by the keyboard. A setting of the stops and a pressure of the keys release the neutral white light and put it to work as wind is put to work in an organ, lead it to definite sources of color and sound."^{1/}

A moving procession of beautiful shapes and colors, apparently produced by prisms and crystals, are thus created by the organ on a plaster screen. "The figures....sweep slowly and majestically upward, turn in upon themselves like crystal veilings moved by mysterious and heavenly winds. Floating in three-dimensional space....they seem to turn inside-out into a fourth....The final effect is utterly apart from the theatre as we know it. It is more of some mystic philosophy of shapes and numbers, come to life, a religion of pure form sprung out of the void."^{2/} "This art of mobile color may be capable of becoming the last step toward the completion of the use of light in art, as music completes sound."^{3/}

The "mystic quality" of the color organ was present in the only expressionistically presented play upon Broadway, the production by Arthur Hopkins of "Macbeth," with settings by Robert Edmond Jones. This whole production was so unique, even in a day of unique happenings in the theatre, and such

^{1/} Young, Stark: Theatre Arts Magazine, January 1922, p.29

^{2/} MacGowan, Kenneth: The Theatre of Tomorrow, p.123

^{3/} Young, Stark: Theatre Arts Magazine, January 1922, p.31

an unusual departure for an American commercial theatre, that Kenneth MacGowan's description is quoted at length:

"Throughout, Jones attempted by significant form to create an abstract background expressing the spiritual relationships of the play. He saw as the dominant element of Macbeth the abnormal influence of the powers symbolized by Shakespeare in the witches. He tried to visualize the superhuman nature of these mystic forces in gigantic masks appearing high in the air above the blasted heath. Through the rest of the play he placed upon the stage very simple and abstract forms to carry the mood induced by the supernatural influences which seize and dominate the characters constantly throughout Macbeth. These bits of setting were, to him, things projected by the masked forces upon the action of the play....

"The main portions of the drama...were acted upon a deep stage surrounded by dimly seen black hangings. For the first scene of the witches there were only the three silver masks hanging above and three similarly masked figures in red standing motionless in a pool of light below. For most of the scenes in Inverness, Jones used one or two sets of arches, curiously and disturbingly aslant. These developed in dramatic force as the course of the play altered. When Macbeth reached the highest point of his success the two groups seemed to lunge forward and away toward triumph. In the last scenes, when he heard of the coming of Birnam wood, only one set of arches remained and it seemed almost toppling to the ground....The throne of the banquet scene was backed crazily by brooding and malignant shapes. All these elements were handled in the barest and simplest grays, with an occasional dull red, like the backing of the throne. These were lit by sharp beams of light that came, as it were, from the spirits in the void and made patterns of the air. The dominating shapes of the bits of setting created in a sensitive spectator a sensation of terrible, overpowering obsession. These were shapes that suggested not realities but unconscious forces. The characteristic form employed was the distorted Gothic arch. Repeated in shields, conical helmets and spears, it was like the dull point of a murderous dagger. Twisted as it was, it naturally impressed upon the mind the deadly and thwarted ambition which the sisters gave to Macbeth. Here was scenery attempting to suggest an emotional idea, instead of a physical reality!" 1/

The New Playhouse

The expressionistic development, and, in fact, the whole new stagecraft, is thwarted at every turn by the limitations of the modern conventional theatre building, stage and auditorium. Theatre architects and artists are coming more and more to the conviction that the conventionally constructed theatre as it now exists must go. Thus, as a phase of the new movement in the theatre, there is taking place a great physical reformation of the playhouse, the inception of which came in Germany as much as fifteen years ago.

The conventional stage, set within an ornate gilt frame and illusively lighted, is the heritage bequeathed by the Italian operas of the 17th Century, and is in no way adapted to the use of 19th Century drama. In the work of such American architects as Ingalls and Blackall and the German architects Max Littmann and Oskar Kaufmann, and in such theatres as Henry Miller's and Maxine Elliott's in New York City, and in the Hebbel Theatre and the Volksbühne in Berlin, there has been evolved a form suitable for the purposes of modern drama. The aim of the new theatre architects is to combine the plastic vitality of the Elizabethan stage with the dignity and beauty of the Greek stage, and thus produce a theatre appropriate for any type

of theatrical production. The old-fashioned proscenium is going. Forestages and portals and entrances in the walls of the auditorium itself are being introduced. Part of the orchestra will be given over to the actors, and a whole new relation will be established between audience and players, one of intimacy and unity.

The Dalcroze Playhouse in Hellerau near Dresden is a significant example of the new type of playhouse. Dalcroze had as assistants in his experiments the great lighting expert A. von Salzmann, a native Russian, whom Maurice Browne calls "the master of us all," and the lighting pioneer, Appia.

The hall, designed by Heinrich Tessenow, combines both stage and auditorium in a single oblong room. At one end is placed whatever serves as stage and setting and at the other end are the banked seats of the spectators. Merely a space of floor divides the audience from the stage. Through translucent walls of silk the glow of 10,000 electric bulbs illuminates both audience and stage. The effect is that of a "diffused light resembling daylight without visible sun."^{1/} The stage and scene consist of a series of movable platforms and steps, used with simple hangings and flats. These can be used in an infinite variety of combinations.

Max Reinhardt in producing "Oepidus Rex," "Orestes," "The Miracle," "Festpiel" and "Everyman" in circuses made another radical experiment toward a new type of theatre.

^{1/} Freund, Frank E. Washburn: English Stage Yearbook, 1914

These experiments resulted in the remodeling of one of the circus buildings into the Grosses Schauspielhaus in Berlin. The European circus consists of a variety and athletic show produced in a permanent building. Reinhardt lighted the center of the circus and one end of the building where exits and entrances were made. These productions were tremendously successful. "Oedipus," given in 1910, was shown to 317,000 people in 93 performances in 26 cities.

Even here Reinhardt got his inspiration from Gordon Craig. Craig dreamed of such a theatre: "I see a great building to seat many thousands of people. At one end rises a platform of heroic size on which figures of a heroic mould shall move. The scene shall be such as the world shows us, not as our own particular little street shows us. The movements of these scenes shall be noble and great: all shall be illuminated by a light such as the spheres give us, not such as the footlights give us, but such as we dream of."^{1/}

The underlying principles of the Theatre of the Five Thousand are given by Arthur Kahane in Henry Carter's, "Theatre of Reinhardt:"

"The first law of the new theatre is utmost simplicity....All accessories are superfluous; they cannot possibly be noticed, or, if they are, they are a source of distraction...The elaboration of details, the emphasizing of nuances disappear; the actor and the actor's voice are truly essential, while lighting becomes the real source of decoration, its single aim being to bring the important into the light, and to leave the unimportant in the shadow.

^{1/} Craig, Gordon: On the Art of the Theatre, p.98

"Under the influence of these mighty spaces, these big, severe lines, all that is small and petty disappears, and it becomes a matter of course to appeal to the hearts of great audiences with the strongest and deepest elements. . . . This theatre can only express the great eternal elemental passions and the problems of humanity. In it, spectators cease to be mere spectators; they become the people; their emotions are simple and primitive, but great and powerful, as becomes the eternal human race.

"Many things that appear to most people to be inseparable from the theatre are being discarded. No curtain separates stage and auditorium. On entering the theatre the spectator feels and is impressed by the possibilities of space, and the essential mood is created in him to be preserved after the piece has begun. No small, strongly circumscribed, impassable frame separates the action of the play from the outer world, and the action flows freely through the whole of the theatre. . . . The chorus arises and moves in the midst of the audience; the characters meet each other amid the spectators; from all sides the hearer is being impressed, so that gradually he becomes part of the whole, and is rapidly absorbed in the action, a member of the chorus, so to speak. The close contact is the chief feature of the new form of the stage. It makes the spectator a part of the action, secures his entire interest, and intensifies the effect upon him."

The masque form and open-air auditorium of Percy MacKaye in America is the closest parallel to Reinhardt that can be found anywhere. "In his 'Masque of St. Louis' and his 'Caliban,' MacKaye has gone far towards charting some of the essentials of the mass-theatre of the future. In these wind-blown and gigantic entertainments, he has reposed an unfortunate reliance on the spoken word, and neither his verse nor his prose has had the simplicity and vigor that such a form of entertainment demands. But in his imagination he has seen truly the possibility of community drama,

of magnificent communal spectacles fusing color and movement, art and humanity.^{1/}

Other artists and architects in America are at work on the problem. Frank Lloyd Wright, Norman-Bel Geddes and Herman Rosse are experimenting with forms that will call for auditoriums and stages different from anything that has ever been constructed.

Jacques Copeau in his little Théâtre du Vieux Colombier has had great success in effecting stage reforms. There was with him no drastic revolution from the old type of stage. In place of the wings and frame a permanent architectural setting was installed in the back, a balcony with steps, which with the use of hangings could be converted into almost any type of background. The forestage was connected with the auditorium with three curved steps. The whole stage in design and color carried out the plan of the rest of the house.

The war brought Copeau to New York City and he remodeled the Garrick Theatre to resemble the Théâtre du Vieux Colombier. The results have been very gratifying.

While neither the ambitious playhouse of Reinhardt or the natural and finished experiment of Copeau are conclusive, they are prophetic of the coming of an appropriate and natural home for the new play.

The New Play

Not only has the new movement in the theatre produced

^{1/} MacGowan, Kenneth: Continental Stagecraft, p.201

a new stagecraft and a new playhouse; it is bringing a change in the play itself, both as to form and content. Even with the classics to substitute for the drama of realism, plus a small body of imaginative drama, the new stagecraft cannot complete the work of revitalizing the theatre. Playwrights must catch up with the new stagecraft, for the play is the heart of the theatre. It is reasonable to believe that this will happen. A new stagecraft and a new playhouse naturally cause the playwright to write in a style that will suit them. Brander Matthews in the third chapter of his "Study of the Drama" shows how the conditions of the Greek theatre inevitably called for plays of the type written by Aeschylus, Sophocles, and Euripides. Shakespeare's plays depended for their form on the Elizabethan theatre, and so it was with Moliere and the rest of the playwrights down to our own day "ending with Edison's incandescent bulb dictating to the realists." The spirit of the new art of the theatre has been subtly influencing the whole art of the theatre and is slowly reaching the most remote element in the theatre world, the dramatist. Signs of this are seen in the substitution for the three- and four-act form of older forms, many scenes, the soliloquy, rhythmic prose or verse, a general desertion of the old technique of realism.

In speaking of realism a distinction must be made between the 19th Century type and the new realism seen in Ibsen's "Rosmersholm" or O'Neill's "Beyond the Horizon." The former is a slavish imitation of life, which was concerned only with an exterior resemblance. The new realism gives us this exterior,

but delves deep into the undersurface and illumines the soul of life. Realism of this high type will be a part of the theatre for a long time to come, but, at the same time, the movement will be further and further away from realism of any type. In regard to realism the actor, George Arliss says:

"If we consider the limitations of a theatre, and the restricted time allowed for the telling of the story, it would seem plain that the author cannot permit himself to be absolutely true to nature. If realism mean truth to nature, then I am bound to admit that I have never met it throughout any play or any performance in my experience as an actor. Dealing for the moment with the playwright's share in the theatrical production, let us see how far Ibsen was able to be true to life. . . . We will take "Hedda Gabler," which is frequently spoken of as his best play. It contains no end of tricks and artificiality. The repeated allusions to General Gabler's pistols - almost dragged in by the hair - are merely to lead up to the tragedy of Lovborg and the final shooting of Hedda, which I firmly believe Ibsen himself must have regarded as an artificial device for bringing the play to an end. Hedda Gabler in real life, with her fear of scandal, would never have dared to commit suicide at that moment, and leave her character behind her, to the mercy of Brack and the others. . . .

"I do not offer this as a criticism of Ibsen's work. I am merely trying to point out that it is next to impossible to maintain reality while writing a good play. It is quite possible if you are content to write a bad play. But I should say that the art of the dramatist is to appear as natural as possible while continuing to hold the suspense of the drama. If you cannot get drama and realism both at the same time, then there is nothing to do but to discard the realism and hang on to the drama. But you must so cunningly contrive it that you deceive your audience while they are in the theatre." ^{1/}

History of Realism

The realistic movement of the 19th Century was a product of the industrial bondage of this period. It had its beginning

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Arliss, George: Realism on the Stage; Atlantic Monthly, April 1923: pps. 434 and 436

in the fifties in the problem plays of Augier, Dumas fils, and Barri re. The de Goncourts, Zola and Daudet introduced "naturalism" in the sixties and seventies, which was a consciously sordid picture of low-life. Not until Ibsen's "A Doll's House," written in 1879, did realism reach dignity and sincerity. In the late eighties Strindberg began his vitalistic writings with "The Father," "Comrades," and "Miss Julia." Realism reached its highest point in the "free theatre" movement of the nineties, with such playwrights as Porto-Riche, Brieux, Becque, Hervieu, Hauptmann, Halbe and Sudermann.

Maeterlinck and Rostand; D'Annunzio and Bennelli; the Bengian Verhaeren; and von Hofmannstahl from Germany began the reaction against realism. Gradually the great realists Strindberg and Hauptmann began to write plays in a more exalted and imaginative vein. While Chekhov maintained the art form of the realistic technique, he broke away from the conventional plot structure. Shaw and Wedekind broke every law of the old technique they might desire. For all these reactions, however, the modern stage remained realistic until about 1910.

What, then, will be the technique and form of the new drama? Two principles fundamental to all drama will remain: dialogue and rising emotional interest from the beginning to the end. But the new form will be far different from the "Ibsen formula" for the three- or four-act play. An exterior form forced upon drama deadens it. The cause of the ultimate failure of Greek drama is undoubtedly

traceable to the restrictions imposed upon it by the "Greek unities."

The New Form

One element of the new form will be a decided increase in the number of scenes. But few plays are fitted to the three- or four-act form. The action must be so condensed that it is distorted and often unnatural. The logical actions and sometimes even the character of the people presented must be changed. There must be constant strategy to even get the characters in the room before the audience.

With the play of scenes the playwright has greater freedom for expression and can carry along with himself the imagination of the audience. His original conception need not be distorted and he can select from the lives of his characters just those incidents which express his conception. The old form, however, will not be discarded. If the play demands an elaborate interplay of characters and character development, with necessity for emotional preparation of an intense sort, the old form is the best vehicle. "Hamlet" can be divided into twenty scenes, but it more naturally falls into the other form.

Among the plays written in the new form of scenes are: "Liliom," an eight-scene drama by Molnar; "Nju," a thirteen-scene play by Dymow; Tolstoy's "The Living Corpse," cut from thirteen scenes to ten; Schnitzler's "Anatol," a series of one-act plays; the Benrimo-Hazelton "Yellow Jacket;" "The Silver Box," "A Bit o' Love," "Justice" and

"The Mob" by Galsworthy in six scenes; "The Awakening of Spring" by Wedekind, in eighteen scenes; Eugene O'Neill's "The Emperor Jones" in eight scenes.

The influence of the motion picture is seen in the development of scene plays. The screen has developed rapidity of perception, and the result will be quicker dramatic action on the stage. Dialogue will be condensed and come to the point more rapidly. The soliloquy and even the aside may return, not as a lazy makeshift of the author, but as a medium of intercourse between actors and audience. There is promise that elements other than dialogue will have an increasing place, and that color, design, movement and music will be linked with words.

Prose will undoubtedly continue to be the general form of dialogue, but verse will also have its place, not a set measure, but changing as the emotion changes. The promise of this is seen in "A Thousand Years Ago," and "Sappho and Phaon" by Percy Mackaye; in the free verse of "The Magical City" by Zoë Akins; in the varied use of dramatic poetry in "Behind a Watteau Picture" by Robert Emmons Rogers, and Sidney Howard's "Swords:" and in Alfred Kreymborg's unusual and charming plays, such as "Lima Beans."

The New Content

The reaction from realism is not confined to dramatic form alone. The content of drama is being equally affected. The nature of the content of the new drama is not as easily analyzed as is its form. The attempt will be to portray those deeper and more eternal aspects of the soul which

modern psychology has revealed in the study of the unconscious; to explore the unconscious mind which is below the surface of man.

School of Yevreynoff

Three schools of playwrights have developed which are attempting, each in its own way, to put these principles into application. The first is headed by the brilliant Yevreynoff, whose theory is expressed by the word "monodrama." According to this theory the play in its entirety should be seen by the spectators through the eyes of the hero; therefore, every element in the play must assume the color, movement and motive which he believes it to possess. Whether or not any lasting results will come from Yevreynoff's theory is hard to predict.

Futurist School

A second school, headed by F. T. Marinetti, Emilion Settimelli and Bruno Corra, is attempting to reveal those deeper aspects of the soul through a rather violent species of the futurist movement.

The plays of Marinette are curiously written and even more curiously produced. Most of them are extremely short. One shows only the feet of the actors, the rest of their bodies being hidden by black curtains reaching almost to the floor. In another, merely the hands showed above the black curtain in symbolic action.

Expressionist School

The School of Yevreynoff and the Futurist School are too eccentric to permit of much influence or long existence.

The third school is the most sound in theory and is producing plays of decided merit. The name applied to this school is "expressionist." As is the case with expressionistic stage settings, the desire is to subject the appearance of the natural world to the inner reality of the emotion presented.

The beginnings of expressionism are to be found in the first impulses to reach beyond the confines of realism some twenty or thirty years ago in the work of certain of the great European realists. "Both Ibsen and Strindberg came out of Romanticism into Realism, and pass on into a Symbolism that is far on the way towards Expressionism."^{1/} For Ibsen this tendency came to its highest point in "When We Dead Awaken" (1899) and for Strindberg in "The Spook Sonata," (1907), a bizarre and unrealistic piece.

Chekhov and Wedekind showed similar tendencies in their later plays. The production of Chekhov's "The Cherry Orchard" by the Moscow Art Theatre revealed extraordinary virtues, and these virtues belonged for the most part to the realm of expressionism.

A comparison of these expressionistically inclined plays of Ibsen, Strindberg, Chekhov and Wedekind and the newer expressionist dramas of Germany and America reveals their differences. While the ideas of the earlier plays are symbolic, fantastic and often deeply spiritual, the language is always distinctly realistic. The new expressionist

^{1/} MacGowan, Kenneth: Continental Stagecraft, p.28

drama is as unrestricted in speech as it is in idea. In some cases this freedom goes so far that speech depends on sound for its sense. Eugene O'Neill in "The Hairy Ape" successfully develops a speech which is realistically idiomatic, yet which in idea is far beyond the characters of the play.

"To follow the banner of Expressionism in play-writing...requires all three Graces and a strong stomach. The bizarre morbidity, the nauseating sexuality, the lack of any trace of joy or beauty, which characterize the work of many of these who label themselves expressionists in Germany during the last few years, match Strindberg at his unhappiest...Expressionism in the narrow sense in which such plays define it, is a violent storm of emotion beating up from the unconscious mind. Expressionism, as we have so far known it, is a meeting of the fringes of the conscious, and the unconscious, and the meeting is startling indeed."^{1/}

Although even the most famous of these newer expressionist plays have been unable to hold a place in the German repertory, they have had a strong influence in turning playwrights toward a freer technique. The most significant of the plays thus produced is "Masse-Mensch." This play was directed by Jürgen Fehling, who, it is prophesied, will become the leader of the new movement in the Continental theatre. "Masse-Mensch" is a powerful tragedy of the "Social revolution of the 20th Century,"

written by Ernst Toller. When writing the play Toller was serving a twenty-year sentence in a Munich prison for his part in the rebellion following the assassination of Eisner by the reactionaries. This fact has caused the play to be very unpopular with many of the people. The play is entirely without realistic elements and the setting is scarcely even a symbol. It falls in seven scenes, four of which are real and three of which are dream pictures. The real scenes are played before black curtains, and there is no color other than the blue of the woman's dress and a glimpse of yellow dome. The dream scenes are somewhat more elaborately staged. One of the most gripping scenes is the dream picture of the sixth scene, in which is pictured the cell of twisted scarlet bars in which the accused woman kneels. All about are ghosts and shadow-shapes which march across a misty void.

"Masse-Mensch" is a powerful play, powerfully produced. It is the natural outgrowth of the experience through which Germany has passed. "The Germans have been through capitalism with a vengeance, through materialism, through war, and through a revolution that blasted half the people and did not satisfy the rest. Here is the misery of capitalism, the misery of abortive revolution, the misery of defeat and black hunger. Berlin is in purgatory. And Berlin goes to see Masse-Mensch.... Toller and Fehling have made possible the realization of this intense situation

between play and audience."^{1/}

Two other expressionist plays, written by the Czech, Karel Capek, are noteworthy. The first of these, "The Insect Comedy," is a satirical and fantastical play, giving wonderful opportunity for the use of new methods of production. Post-war conditions are symbolically expressed through butterflies, who represent the indolent men and women of the unproductive strata of society and who pay no attention to the threatening disaster. The grubs represent the ever-busy profiteers and misers of war days. The ants symbolize the "eternal laborers," who are finally victorious.

"R.U.R." is a rather gruesome and somewhat philosophic play. These letters stand for the name of a firm which is in the business of manufacturing "Roboters," workmen who are made and given life by a machine. Finally they become aware of their power and kill all mankind, except one man. They discover to their horror that they have lost the formula by which they were made, and, therefore, can produce no more "Roboters." After twenty years they are worn out and the end is near. In every way they are searching for the means to perpetuate themselves. The one man whose life had been spared finds the solution when he discovers a dim spark of love growing brighter and brighter between a male and a female Roboter. Thus mankind will again be restored.

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MacGowan, Kenneth; Continental Stagecraft, p.154

None of these plays at best have attained the full possibilities of expressionism. There is much that is uncertain and painfully sordid about them. But they are bringing a wonderful vitality to the theatre. Such a play as Eugene O'Neill's "The Hairy Ape" can well give hope for the future.

"Expressionism in the theatre has to seek the way of music, the way towards beauty and ecstasy. The difficulty of the playwright is that he must always feel the pull of the actual life about him; he must make his drama out of human beings and not out of vision or pure emotional response. The world about him is corrupt and corrupting outwardly, as well as beautiful and wonderful within. He cannot, like the musician, leap away from its entanglements by putting his hands to an instrument of abstract art. But he can gain a certain release by forswearing as much as possible the reproduction of the actual.^{1/}

Summary

This, then, is the history of the new movement in the theatre with its various elements and results, a movement which is comparatively young in age, yet which has brought a total upheaval of the whole art of the theatre within the short span of its activity. The new movement has brought a new stagecraft, a new type of stage and playhouse, and a new drama, which, on the one hand, takes the form of an ennobled realistic play that delves below the surface and

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reveals the soul of man; this type being best exemplified in the English School of Sincerity; and, on the other hand, has in the expressionist plays of the Continent revolted from the old realistic type altogether and is dealing with life at the meeting place of the conscious and unconscious mind of man. In only one aspect has the new movement in the theatre reached anything like completion, that being the technique of production known as the new stagecraft. There is much to be found in the new movement that gives promise of being mere passing eccentricity, but in every phase of activity tremendous strides are being made, and the future is bright with promise for the theatre.

AMERICA AND THE NEW MOVEMENT

America has been briefly considered in a general way in connection with these different elements of the new movement in the theatre. Let us now, however, definitely consider America, the effect of foreign influence, her failures and achievements, and the outlook for the future.

Viewing the commercial theatre as a whole, the conditions are far from encouraging. The aesthetic drama, which has become such a splendid thing in Europe, has been given little or no attention by the American dramatist and commercial producer.

The American Playwright

Let us consider first the American playwright. The greatest progress made by the American playwright has been in the field of the new intensive drama of thought. "To

perfect the old drama of emotion and to add a new significance to it - as the English dramatists are doing - rather than to strike into the untried field of decorative or aesthetic drama, clearly is the aim of the younger (and the only important) generation of American playwrights."^{1/}

The new English dramatists are having a profound influence in America. There are many indications that the American dramatist is trying to picture sincerely, beautifully and emotionally the real life of the times. But as compared with the great English dramatists, such as Galsworthy, Barrie and Shaw, he seems to have failed in the attempt.

It is not that the material for great, sincere drama is lacking in American life, or that there is no demand for it. Never has the time been more ripe for a deep revealing of life. Producers have insisted that the American public has no interest in the drama of sincerity and that it would not support a serious American drama. Five or ten years ago this might have been true. But in the present day most of the people, moved by the great and dread experience of the world in the past few years, are thinking more deeply and sincerely. America, with its great cities, its mountains and its prairies, its vast polyglot numbers, is latent with immense possibilities for profound drama. The dramatist, however, who can picture the great activity and life of America and yet show the beauty running through it all in a strong convincing way is yet to be found.

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Cheney, Sheldon: The New Movement in the Theatre, p.93

The plays of Barrie have met with great success in this country and the public is manifesting an ever-increasing interest in well-acted productions of dramas by Galsworthy, Masfield, Synge, Bennett and Shaw. Some of Ibsen's dramas, interpreted by such actresses as Mrs. Fiske, Mary Shaw, and Nazimova, have met with striking response. Winthrop Ames in a series of advanced plays has been remarkably successful in the matter of support by the public. The majority of the offerings of the repertoire and experimental theatres in America are of the serious, advanced type, and such theatres are steadily increasing in popular favor and patronage.

It would seem, then, that the sad lack of good American plays is to be traced not to any inherent "difference" in the American theatre public, nor to a dearth of good dramatic material in American life, but rather to the fact that no dramatist has successfully pictured that life. When American life and people have formed the theme, merely the outward aspects have been presented, more or less melodramatically. Broadway has been demanding the "play with a punch," and this phrase reveals one of the great weaknesses of American drama, strength without subtlety or depth. It deals with the surface aspects of life, with the violent, brute moments.

Another great lack in America is the absence of the element of beauty and poetry. With all great dramatists there is the artistic touch, such as is seen in the dramas of Barrie and Galsworthy, and it is this poetic and artistic

insight that has always distinguished really great and lasting drama. Some American playwrights have written plays of beautiful poetic quality, as, for example, Percy Mackaye in "Sappho and Phaon" and Josephine Preston Peabody in "The Piper," but many of these are not effectivelyactable, and must be considered as literature rather than as drama.

Foreign critics have brought forth the charge that American playwrights, as a whole, cater to the popular taste and sacrifice their independence and ideals to give the public what the play managers have insisted it demands. Drama, of course, exists for the audience, yet it need not be brought to the low level of the uneducated, inartistic part of the public. With the presentation of really fine things the taste of even these might be greatly raised. Then there is a great body of cultured men and women forming a goodly per cent of the theatre public that would welcome with enthusiasm a drama of depth and sincerity. Drama that is true art will draw great audiences without any additions of comic relief, sensations and insincere and forced endings.

These, then, are the ways in which the American playwright has failed; a portrayal of brute strength without subtlety or depth; a lack of the sense of beauty; and a pandering to the uneducated tastes of the least cultured of the American audience.

What has been the cause of these failures? The first of them, strength without subtlety, is in some measure due

to the newness and youngness of everything American. We are still finding ourselves. In addition, many of our modern playwrights are, or have been, newspaper writers, among whom may be mentioned Eugene Walter, Augustus Thomas, and George Ade. These men have a fine dramatic sense, but they have been accustomed to making the most of surface sensational aspects of life without giving much thought to underlying causes and motives. Their plays, while full of vitality and force, have yet a certain sense of hurry and lack of depth.

Many of the older American playwrights who have been trained in the old theatre school suppose that what is only theatrical is really drama. They have become so used to certain stock characters and situations that they are inseparable in their minds from real drama. David Belasco, for example, whose training came in the eighties and nineties, clings to much that is insincere and inartistic.

An even stronger factor in the failure of the American playwright has been a commercializing of his talent. He has followed the standard of the dollar rather than the standard of art. Again and again monetary considerations have caused men of real promise to lower their ideals and produce melodramatic plays, others that were saccharine with sentiment, and even musical comedy librettos. "Have we no playwrights who create sometimes from inner impulse, for love of their craft, and not solely from motives of sordid gain? Until we have such playwrights we shall never have a

truly vital and worthy American drama; we shall, indeed, have no playwrights deserving the high title of artists."^{1/}

Perhaps the most fundamental cause of the failure of the American playwright has been the consideration of the play as of secondary importance to the acting and setting. The playwright has been subjected to the demands of manager, producer and actor. This condition is changing, however, and the American theatre is increasingly realizing that "the play is the thing."

Compared with some of the great dramatists of Europe, the American playwrights seem, therefore, to have failed in their task. But compared with the plays of fifteen or twenty years ago, there has been tremendous advancement. There are great forces at work in the American theatre which give promise of a fine flowering of American drama within the years to come. There are certain American dramatists who would seem to give hope for future American playwrights. Let us consider some of the best of the individual American dramatists.

Percy Mackaye has shown marked poetic ability, but he is somewhat lacking in strength. Some of his plays, such as "Sappho and Phaon" and "The Scarecrow" are to be regarded as literature rather thanactable drama, but more recently Mackaye has turned to contemporary American life for his themes. In "Mater" and "Anti-Matrimony," social and political life is treated in rather subtle comedy.

^{1/} Eaton, Walter Prichard: At the New Theatre, p.33

"Tomorrow" is a venture in the social problem play. While these three combine poetic insight with contemporary theme, they have not met with very great success in the theatre. There is in Mackaye's plays a need of more compact form, a stronger emotional appeal, and greater strength. There is hope that Mackaye will yet produce something really great. With added strength, more dramatic force and a better technique, Mackaye bids fair to become one of the foremost American playwrights of the day. His contributions to the field of community drama and pageantry have been especially great; in fact, he is probably the foremost figure in this field in American. Among his pageants are "The St. Louis Masque," "Caliban" and "The Evergreen Tree."

The plays of Josephine Preston Peabody (the late Mrs. Marks), of which "The Piper" is best known, are dramatic poetry rather than poetic drama, and she always was the poet rather than the dramatist. Her plays will live, not because of their value as drama, but because of their literary beauty.

Eugene Walter is one of the most forceful of American playwrights. If he could combine the poetic conception of Mackaye with his own strength, Walter would be capable of great things. He reaches his best in "The Easiest Way" and "Fine Feathers," but his best exhibits no great art. His plays are stark realism without any element of ennobling beauty or spiritual insight.

In his ideals Augustus Thomas is perhaps closest to

the drama of sincerity of any American playwright. He first became known through a series of melodramas and farce-comedies, popular but unimportant. Being increasingly aware of the dignity of his art, however, he was not satisfied with his success and turned more and more to plays having themes of sincerity and worth. In his later writings, indeed, Thomas is inclined to go to the other extreme and has at times been guilty of preaching at his audience. His finest play is "As a Man Thinks." Thomas is not only a playwright, recognizing the dignity of his calling, but he is a master of dramatic technique and dialogue, and is a craftsman much in sympathy with the ideals of the new stagecraft.

The work of Charles Klein is significant because of his discovery of the value of American life as dramatic material. He has gained great popularity in his plays "The District Attorney," "Maggie Pepper," "The Lion and the Mouse" and "The Third Degree," but in them there is much of insincerity and theatricality out of keeping with his serious themes.

Certain of the younger American playwrights are deserving of serious consideration. Among these, Edward Sheldon gives special promise. His first play "Salvation Nell," although slightly shallow in sentiment, had great romantic charm. The same might be said of "The High Road" and "Romance." They also hold the interest, but it is doubtful if they have any significant value. In "The Nigger" Sheldon has incorporated a larger and more serious outlook. This play justifies the predication of the possibility of a

large future for Sheldon.

Charles Kenyon is another of the promising younger American playwrights. His "Kindling" has a depth of truth and sincerity that is a new and hopeful note in American drama.

Charles Rann Kennedy in "The Servant in the House" and "The Terrible Week," produced plays of real greatness. Kennedy is very close to the highest type of intensive, sincere drama, but he can hardly be claimed as one of the American playwrights, since he is a product of the English rather than the American stage.

Eleanor Gates, in "The Poor Little Rich Girl," has brought to the American stage that element of fantasy and poetry which it so lacks. The real and the imaginative are mingled in a way that savors of Barrie, and this play is a distinct contribution to American drama.

The last three or four years have witnessed the rise of an American playwright so in harmony with the principles of the new theatre movement and with such a depth of insight into life that he gives extraordinary promise. Eugene O'Neill, winning twice in succession the Pulitzer prize, is now contributing regularly to the best plays of each season. O'Neill is essentially a realist, whose work goes beneath the surface and holds up the picture of the real soul. Among his realistic plays are "The Straw," "Beyond the Horizon," "The Dreamy Kid," "The First Man" and "Anna Christie." In "The Emperor Jones," a remarkable portrayal, in eight scenes, of racial evolution and the strength of

the subconscious, and in "The Hairy Ape" O'Neill goes beyond realism into expressionism. "The Hairy Ape" is the story of "a gigantic and awful stoker on an ocean liner. . . . The scheme of the play is to show us an abysmal brute strong in the sense of his own power, a power that drives through all life just as the steamer he fires drives through the water, and then to shake his confidence and to drive him to destruction by bringing up against him sharply and suddenly and terribly the reality of the life above him. Down into the stokehold where he is sweating and cursing, comes a decadent daughter of riches. She sees this human horror in the red light of the furnaces, cries 'You filthy beast!' and faints. For the rest of the play Yank, the stoker, struck into thought of himself and the world which has degraded and insulted him, seeks vengeance. He ends a dead man in the cage of a gorilla with whom in a last desperate madness he wants to swear blood-brotherhood."^{1/}

Summing up the present situation of the American playwright, it may be said that little or no contribution has been made to the aesthetic drama, and that Eugene O'Neill alone has ventured into the field of expressionism. What progress has been made in the new movement has been largely in the direction of the drama of idea and sincerity. While compared with the great English dramatists the American dramatists seem a failure, there are hopeful signs of progress. "Brooding over all the signs, one need not stretch the imagination too far to see emerging out of the

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MacGowan, Kenneth: Theatre Arts Magazine, July 1922,
Broadway at the Spring, pps.187-188

future the man of wide vision, the poet who yet is the perfect technician, who will weave the material of the time into a gripping story, at the same time revealing the beauty of his own imagination."^{1/}

The American Producer

Let us now turn to the American producer of the commercial theatre. There is little to be seen here that is even remotely suggestive of the ideas of Craig or other European artists. The average American dramatic production, confining our attention now solely to the commercial theatre, continues to be a slavish realistic presentation with photographic accuracy and naturalistic detail. Beauty and unity have been driven from the American theatre by the pursuit of naturalism and meaningless realism. In the first place, nearly every American drama has been produced in settings that take the attention from the action, and, in the second place, the author's dramatic plan and continuity of action have been destroyed by an introduction of various types of extraneous "stunts," comic relief, etc., calculated to arouse interest.

David Belasco, staunch advocate of naturalism, is perhaps the leader among American producers. This is unfortunate, for his influence is great, and "Belascoism" is a great hindrance to the new movement in America.

Belasco sets forth his creed in the sentence, "I believe in the little things." In a Belasco production

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Cheney, Sheldon: The New Movement in the Theatre, p.95

every detail is represented, nothing is left to the imagination of the spectator. Even in "The Return of Peter Grimm," in which Belasco came the nearest to creating atmosphere of any of his productions, the setting was one of painful and distracting accuracy.

The same faults will be found in nine-tenths of the settings of the American commercial producers, only these - Klaw and Erlanger or the Shuberts, - do not attain the naturalistic perfection of Belasco. The exterior settings are even more painful; real trees and painted trees mixed together, buildings of swaying canvas with real doors and windows, signs, lamp-posts, and once there was produced a real field of lettuce that aroused the utmost curiosity of the spectators. Few indeed have been the restful, suggestive settings that are so essential to art.

Let us turn to those extraneous incidents introduced in the play, with the intention of increasing interest. Belasco himself tells of a cat that was trained to walk across the stage and to stretch himself at a given point in a production of "Hearts of Oak," and of a baby who laughed at just the right place. "That cat," he says, "was always greeted with laughter and applause, and every night brought down the house.... The animated baby won the house every night, and both the cat and baby drew hundreds to the theatre." To be sure, but one wonders what happened to the mood and interest of the drama itself in the interim!

In one of the most intense scenes of "The Woman,"

another Belasco production, the squeak of an ascending pneumatic elevator was so wonderfully imitated that the entire attention of the audience passed from the play to it, and the dramatic interest had to be entirely rebuilt.

Notwithstanding Belasco's artistic limitations, however, he has made real contribution to the American stage along certain lines. He has the conception of the all-commanding director through whose hands should pass every element of the production. His careful and deliberate preparation of each production is a fine example for all producers. As a mechanician Belasco has made several valuable contributions, and in the matter of lighting he has advanced very far.

Among all the American commercial producers but two or three are following the new ideals of stage production. Arthur Hopkins has done the most for the progress of the new stagecraft in the commercial American theatre, just as Maurice Browne has done the most for its progress in the field of the little theatre. With the aid of the scenic artist, Robert Edmond Jones, whose designs are an embodiment of the highest in the new stagecraft, Hopkins has shown the possibilities of the new art for the professional drama of today and together they have remade realistic production.

Edwin Björkman aptly summarizes the conditions of the theatre in America as follows: "The American theatre was organized as a vast gambling business; and the professional gambler, is the last man in the world to take a risk.

So the Broadway producer, afraid above all else to play the game in a new way, and clinging tenaciously to his traditional superstitions and conventions, repeats himself year in and year out; and New York spills to the four corners of the country an unending stream of musical comedies, and revue, and crook plays, and society farces. It is only the very rare exception that is new, that is different, that is original. Thus the professional theatre has set up a false ideal of commercial success and imitation - and real progress does not come that way."^{1/}

To find the strongest influences toward progress in the new ideals of the theatre in America, one must look not to the commercial theatre, but to the foreign plays incorporating these ideals which have been imported to this country, and to the amateur and semi-professional experimental and little theatres which have sprung up in the last ten or fifteen years.

Progress through Foreign Influence

The European influence on the American theatre, coming into direct contact with the American stage through imported plays, has been very great. Let us consider the individual contributions of the different countries.

As has been stated, the dramatists of the English School of Sincerity have had a strong influence on the American playwright in his progress toward a drama of sincerity and idea. The plays of Barrie have met with great success in this country, and Galsworthy, Masfield, Synge and Shaw are increasingly in demand. Mrs. Fiske and Nazimova a few

^{1/}

Björkman, Edwin: quoted by Cheney on page 178 of The New Movement in the Theatre.

years ago met a fine response in a series of Ibsen plays. These English plays have had a large influence in making a place for the drama of sincerity in the hearts of the theatre public.

There has been an increasing interest in the repertory of the Irish Players and in Irish plays in general. The Irish Players have been seen in this country once or twice. "The White Headed Boy," produced in New York during the season of 1921, is a clever, pungent Irish comedy, in which production were seen some of the original Irish Players.

The Viennese influence has entered America largely through the plays of Arthur Schnitzler. In 1912-13 his "Anatol," a series of one-act plays, was one of the most noteworthy of Broadway productions, and both "Anatol" and "The Green Cockatoo" have been presented by several of the experimental theatres. The heaviness of the German is lacking in the Austrian plays and Schnitzler is distinctly Austrian. He has a delicate aristocracy and refinement of touch in his plays. Schnitzler's power is the creation of an atmosphere - "a dim twilight atmosphere as of autumn evenings crowded with reminiscence. It is indescribably charming and completely aimless, a dream world as magical as that of any symbolist, yet unsymbolic."^{1/}

"Liliom," an eight scene play by Franz Molnar, comes from Budapest and its production by the New York Theatre Guild, with settings by Lee Simonson, has met with distinct

^{1/} Dukes, Askley: "Anatol and Other Plays." His introduction.

success.

One of the chief influences from France was the sojourn of Jacques Copeau in New York City during the Great War. He was a veritable ambassador of French culture. His influence was in the direction of a more beautiful and plastic formal stage. France has been rather untouched, however, by the modern currents apparent elsewhere. The plays of Rostand, Maeterlinck and Molière are frequently produced in America. The plays of Maeterlinck, notably "Sister Beatrice," have furnished good opportunities for a practical application of the new principles of design. The plays of Brieux have given an impetus toward the new realism. Two new French plays produced very recently in America are "Don Juan," an adaptation of Henri Bataille's "L'Homme a la Rose," and "The S.S. Tenacity," a character comedy in three acts from the French of Charles Vidrac. The essence of modern French drama is to make the appeal in the most direct way possible. There is no hesitation in using gross material grossly. There is much that is seemingly immoral in the plays of Bataille, for example, because he deals with the most elemental and natural forces in personified form.

Germany has given the strongest impetus toward expressionism. But few German plays have been produced in this country, chief among them being the expressionist play by Georg Kaiser "From Morn to Midnight." This is the story of a bank clerk who, under the spell of a woman, steals a fortune. When the woman repudiates him, he resorts to various types of dissipation, and ends as a

suicide in a Salvation Army Hall, This is a rather amazing play with a marked staccato movement. The greatest contribution of Germany to America, however, has been in the impetus given to the new stagecraft. Some of the work of Reinhardt has been seen in "Sumurun," and some of the younger scenic artists have made a firsthand study of Germany's high achievements along the lines of design. "Creditors" by Strindberg was admirably produced by Maurice Browne in the season of 1922.

The Russian influence in America has been large. The unbearable conditions in their native land have brought the greatest artists of the Russian theatre to America. The Russian Ballet is here, and the Moscow Art Theatre Company, under the direction of Stanislowsky, has transported itself bodily to this country. Among the Moscow Art Theatre Company's offerings in America is "The Cherry Orchard," a play by Chekhov that met with marked success abroad. In this Chekhov's definite movement toward expressionism is seen.

In addition, there have been many Russian plays produced here, largely by the experimental theatres. Ben-Ami is being seen in Russian Yiddish repertory, among which is "The Idle Inn," by Peretz Hirschbein. Andreyeff's "He Who Gets Slapped," a Theatre Guild production, suffered much change in its journey from Moscow to New York. This is a bitter, mad tragedy of the realistic type, the atmosphere of which was considerably sweetened and softened in the production by the Theatre Guild. Lee Simonson's

settings were probably the best ever designed for a realistic play in America. "The Life of Man," a rather gloomy, heavy play by Andreyeff, was recently produced by the Harvard Dramatic Club in Boston, the settings of which were expressionist.

Balieff's "Chauve-Souris" has also suffered change in the transportation to American soil, but not so great a one as did "He." "Chauve-Souris" is a brilliant and consistent "super-cabaret."

Through the importation of these foreign plays, all of which are products of the new movement in the theatre, America is seeing at first hand the practical application of some of the highest ideals of the new theatre. Many of these plays furnish excellent material for working out the new principles of design and setting on the part of American stage artists, and for experiment by the little theatres. Some of them are being attempted by the more advanced of the commercial theatres, although it is the little and experimental theatres that are offering the most of these foreign plays to the public. Other examples of imported plays will be given in connection with the following discussion of the experimental theatre.

Experimental and Little Theatres

The second and most powerful agency of progress in dramatic art in America is coming in the amateur and semi-professional theatres and dramatic societies which have sprung up in the past ten or fifteen years as a protest

against the commercialism of the professional theatre and to satisfy a longing on the part of many for the best things in theatre art, which the commercial theatre overlooks. Their ideals are in the direction of art rather than commercial success and their methods are experimental rather than traditional and fixed; hence, they have advanced far beyond the commercial theatre. They have not so far developed a great American drama or corrected the inartistic faults of the professional theatre, but their influence is counting largely even in the commercial theatre, and they deserve the credit for practically all the advance in dramatic art that has been made in America.

The experimental theatre, for purposes of discussion, may be divided into two classes: (1) the "art" theatres, such as was the Chicago Little Theatre, which exist for the production of plays not commonly seen on the commercial stage and to do experimental work; and (2) the university and college theatres and dramatic activity. It is in these two that the wide-spread spirit of change and the freedom for experimentation exist.

The Chicago Little Theatre, founded by Maurice Browne, although no longer in existence, furnishes one of the most typical and interesting examples of this type.

Maurice Browne has done the most for the progress of the new stagecraft in the world of the little theatre of probably any producer. Beginning with amateur material Browne, with his characteristic energy, produced an organiza-

tion which during its existence was one of the most vital expressions of the new dramatic spirit in America. The first season saw the production of Euripides' "The Trojan Women," Strindberg's "The Stronger," Yeats' "On Baile's Strand" and Schnitzler's "Anatol." This list is indicative of the breadth of view and courage of this organization. The Chicago Little Theatre showed a preference for literary and poetic drama and produced certain literary plays rarely seen on the stage elsewhere, among them some of the less known of Yeats' work and Wilfred Wilson Gibson's "Womenkind" and "The Ferry." The newest ideals of simplicity and suggestion were incorporated in the settings. The Chicago Little Theatre exerted a large influence all over the country, and thus it is deserving of consideration even though it is not now in existence.

The Boston Theatre, which gave to Livingston Platt the opportunity to work out his theories of symbolic and suggestive setting, exemplified the experimental ideal and produced little known plays, both American and foreign. The Boston Toy Theatre has been succeeded by the Henry Jewitt Players, a repertory company bringing to the public some of the best European plays, chiefly those of the English School of Sincerity. Livingston Platt later has found opportunity to apply his principles of staging to productions of the more advanced commercial theatres.

The Chicago Theatre Society did not have production as its aim, but by giving financial support it has enabled the Chicago Fine Arts Theatre to present semi-professional

companies such as the Irish Players of the Abbey Theatre, Dublin; Miss Horniman's excellent company from her repertory theatre in Manchester; the Coburn Players; and Winthrop Ames' production of "Anatol." Among the productions were some of the best of the new English dramas, as many as twenty-two plays by Irish dramatists, and certain contemporary plays seldom staged, such as Charles Rann Kennedy's "The Terrible Meek" and "The Necessary Evil."

The New York Little Theatre, now known as the New Theatre, under the direction of Winthrop Ames, does not experiment in unknown fields so much as it applies those things the experimental theatres have found valuable and workable. Its greatest value lies in its education of an ever widening audience in an appreciation of the true art of the theatre. The New Theatre is the first Broadway playhouse to be directed by a man who is a product of the new movement. Winthrop Ames is a graduate of Harvard and with his training in the Harvard Workshop he is essentially a product of the experimental theatre.

The New York Theatre Guild has done splendid things in the production of unusual plays, especially those imported from Europe, such as Verhaeren's "The Cloister," Masefield's "The Faithful" and "Lilium" by Molner. These plays furnished opportunity for excellent designs by Viélé and Simonson.

Other New York experimental theatres carrying on much the same work are the Bandbox, the Washington Square Players, who during several seasons in New York gave a

remarkable impetus to the writing of one-act plays in America, and The Neighborhood Playhouse. William Archer refers to the Neighborhood Playhouse as "perhaps the most delightful of the New York sideshows." Those who know it more intimately give it a far higher place than that. Concerning this theatre Oliver M. Saylor says: "I like to think of the Neighborhood Playhouse of the Henry Street Settlement as a laboratory built securely on the ground floor of an ultimate national theatre," ^{1/} and Mrs. Fiske says of it: "One of the most stimulating playhouses I know. Rare good taste prevails everywhere - good taste, good sense." ^{2/}

This theatre was founded in 1915 to meet the community's need for aesthetic self-expression. There were established a workshop for all the arts of the theatre and classes in acting and dancing. Fine plays and noteworthy artists and players were at the first brought from the outside for no other purpose than example. The demands of the audience, ever increasing in size, have grown beyond the players of the House itself, so now it is necessary to employ a professional company with a regular subscription season of performances. The Neighborhood Playhouse is one of the pioneers in the new field and has brought to the American stage numerous significant plays which otherwise would not have reached it.

The Provincetown Players, whose first productions were made on Cape Cod, later opened a small playhouse in New York and it was these Players who gave the public an opportunity to know the dramas of Eugene O'Neill.

^{1/} Saylor, Oliver M.: Theatre Arts Magazine, Jan. 1922, p. 15
^{2/} Fiske, Mrs. : " " " " "

The art theatre movement is growing so fast it almost defies accurate record. Philadelphia and Los Angeles both have their Little Theatres. There are the Lake Forest Players, the Forest Theatre Group at Carmel, the Detroit Theatre of Arts and Crafts under the direction of Sam Hume, and many amateur stage societies all doing pioneer work in the production of "advanced" drama and of the less familiar plays both foreign and native, and are putting into practical application the principles of the new stagecraft.

University Theatres and Dramatic Activities

Let us turn now to the dramatic activities of some of the American universities as another sign of progress in the United States. Harvard University stands first in the direction of original student composition. Under the able leadership of Professor George Pierce Baker a two-year course in dramatic composition is offered, the personnel of the class being determined on the basis of original play manuscripts. The "Forty-Seven Workshop" (taking its name from the number of the course) has developed as a dramatic laboratory in which the students' plays are staged. The productions of the Workshop have covered a very wide range, from pure pantomime to intensely psychologic plays. Those plays which have demonstrated highest worth are later presented in a more public way by the Harvard Dramatic Club, and many of them are available in printed form and are being produced all over the country.

Similar movements are taking place at Yale, Dartmouth, Vassar and Wellesley. The growth of dramatic activities at the University of Wisconsin is an exceedingly significant development. Under the leadership of Professor Dickinson there has been established the Wisconsin Dramatic Society, which is doing fine work in original productions. Its aim is the creation of a distinctive body of Middle Western American drama.

The dramatic activities at the University of California have been chiefly in revivals and productions of poetic drama. The "Greek Theatre" has offered an incomparable setting for plays of this type. The works of the famous Greek dramatists have been presented in a fine way in this theatre. Among the Greek productions have been "The Birds" of Aristophanes, the "Ajax" of Sophocles, and Aeschylus' "Eumenides." Other productions include such widely diversified plays as "The Little Clay Cart" from the Sanskrit, Schiller's "Maria Stuart," and Ibsen's "Vikings at Helgeland." A number of the early English mystery and miracle plays have been given, many of Shakespeare's plays, also plays of Jonson, Phillips, and Shaw. The Greek Theatre has attracted professional companies and plays have been given which found an adequate and extremely effective setting in the Greek Theatre. Among these professional offerings were "Antigone" and "Electra" produced by Margaret Anglin; Racine's "Phedre" by Sarah Bernhardt; Maude Adams in Rostand's "L'Aiglon; the Ben Greet Players in Shakespeare plays. It cannot be doubted

that such a dramatic education given to the students of a great university is helping to build the foundation for a coming great American drama.

What is being done at the University of California is being carried out in equally vital experiments at ten or a dozen universities throughout the country.

Another helpful and broadening university influence has been the courses in dramatic literature. The instruction of such men as Professor William Lyon Phelps of Yale, Professor Dickinson of the University of Wisconsin, Professor Baker of Harvard, and Professor Richard Burton of the University of Minnesota is doing much to give to the rising generation the vision of a finer drama than has yet been dreamed of in the American theatre.

Open-Air Theatres

A significant phase of the experimental movement is the development of the open-air theatre. Within the last few years a large number of outdoor theatres have been built in America, and the open-air theatre has become a large factor in wholesome dramatic progress.

The intensive social drama, the purely emotional play, and the type of play that depends upon an intimate, interior atmosphere, do not lend themselves to presentation in the out-door theatre, but simple and decorative sorts of drama can be given out-of-doors with far greater effect than within. Plays that are specially suited to production in these out-door theatres are those of broad rather than subtle spiritual significance, and plays that depend largely

upon decorative movement, procession, pageantry and dancing. Here the large mass, and changing lines and colors count for most.

Certain limitations have been found in the out-door theatre and certain lessons have been learned through experience. Not only does the open-air theatre definitely limit the type of drama produced, but plays demanding certain mechanical equipment cannot be successfully given. In the second place, the keynote of the out-door stage must be simplicity, and the background cannot be decorated. Certain stage managers in bringing their plays from the regular theatre to the Greek Theatre of the University of California have attempted to reproduce their regular settings in this theatre, with resulting failure. The natural setting must be accepted or the whole effect is ruined. In the third place, it has been discovered that climatic conditions are a strong influence in determining the success of the out-door theatre. The Greek Theatre is located in a part of the country where five and perhaps even eight or nine months of fine weather may be relied upon. For universities and experimental producing companies in climates where the weather is uncertain, the aim should be to first build a good interior theatre, and add the out-door theatre when possible. The writer knows from experience the anxiety with which the skies are searched for promises of fine weather on the "final night" of an out-door performance in the Middle West, and how rarely the perfect night or afternoon is forthcoming.

The development of the open-air theatre perhaps has had more social than dramatic significance. Outdoor drama is an exceedingly democratic thing. Not only does the community as a whole frequently undertake united dramatic efforts to be presented out-of-doors, but the seats are ungraded, and rich and poor mingle together in democratic brotherhood.

The open-air theatre is a most promising influence in the dramatic world. It is having a wholesome and vitalizing influence on the commercial theatres and has proved a most effective socializing agency.

The work which the experimental theatres are doing will not be fully effective until it is linked up with the professional theatres. The American audience as a whole cannot be reached except through the commercial theatre. The experimental theatres must not lower their ideals, but the commercial theatres must accept the ideals of the experimental theatres. While the commercial theatre as a whole seems far behind all the new great movement in the theatre, there are to be seen the sure signs of progress and advancement. Broadway is more and more responding to the impulses to reform being carried on by the experimental theatres. It is not too optimistic to believe that the time is coming when many of the reactionary leaders of the American theatre will yield to the new movement, and that the United States will take a place in the field of the finest and best in the art of the theatre.

SUMMARY OF THESIS

The new movement is comparatively young in age, but it has brought a total upheaval of the whole art of the theatre within the short span of its activity. The new movement has brought a new stagecraft, a new type of stage and playhouse, and a new drama, which, on the one hand, takes the form of an ennobled realistic play that delves below the surface and reveals the soul of man, this type being best exemplified in the English School of Sincerity; and, on the other hand, has in the expressionist plays of the Continent revolted from the old realistic type altogether and is dealing with life at the meeting place of the conscious and subconscious mind of man. In only one aspect has the new movement in the theatre reached anything like completion, that being the technique of production known as the new stagecraft. But in every phase tremendous strides are being made.

Compared with the great progress that has been made in Europe, America seems to have failed in practically every aspect of the new movement. On the part of the playwright little or no contribution has been made to the aesthetic drama or the field of expressionism. What progress has been made has been largely in the direction of the drama of idea and sincerity. The case of the American producer is even less hopeful when considered from the view of the commercial theatre. Old standards of realistic and naturalistic production are still the general rule.

For elements of progress in America one must turn to the production here of foreign plays embodying the new principles and to the experimental and little theatres.

The situation in America seems rather deplorable, but the failure of the American playwright and producer is only a comparative one. There are signs of progress and advancement. Broadway is more and more responding to the impulses toward reform being carried on by the experimental theatres. It is not too optimistic to believe that the time is approaching when many of the reactionary leaders of the American theatre will yield to the new movement, and that the United States will take a place in the field of artistic and sincere drama.

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(Note: - Except where otherwise indicated,
the books listed were read in entirety)