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DRAMATIC STRUCTURE AND THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE PHYSICAL THEATRE

THE story of the first dramatic productions has been told many times. It is a narration slightly confused in detail, since much of it is based on conjecture. One indisputable central fact, however, emerges from the welter of conflicting theories: that is, that drama, among savage tribes as well as among gentler people, had its origin in the meeting of religion with play. The whole interesting tangle of ritual, pantomime, dance, song, masking, fear of the terrible gods, delight in the pleasant gods, gladness for the coming of spring and harvest, sorrow for the death of heroes and loved ones, sex, and mystery—is the matrix of drama. It really matters very little whether the first actual organized performance which may be called a play was an orgiastic celebration of some god of fertility or of some mortal doer of great deeds. What is certain is that some time before the sixth century B. C. drama was taking form in Greece.

The early history of the drama among all peoples shows that the place of performance, the theatre, as it came to be called, was developed according to the natural demands of men to be in position to see and hear as well as possible what they want to see and hear: first as a simple cleared space around which the spectators might stand, then—as audiences grew in size—as a sort of arena surrounded by hillsides, from which spectators could look down upon the action, or as a platform of some kind, so that performers might be elevated

and therefore visible beyond a few rows of standers-by. In essence all theatres in all times, however primitive or however complicated with machines and boxes and foyers, are made up of these same two elements: a place for spectators and a place for actors. This simple arrangement has no direct relationship with the drama itself; it is an inevitable disposition of the thing to be seen and the observers, whether for a religious ceremony, a political gathering, an address, a dance, a song, or a play. The various forms which the theatre eventually assumed, however, are in some part the result of the development of the dramatic production, with many, often untraceable influences from other uses to which the original arrangement of spectator-spectacle was put.

In the sixth century, the old dithyrambic ceremony (whether its origin was in worship of Dionysus or in funeral services for heroes) gradually evolved into definite dramatic form, with a protagonist addressing the choregus and chorus. Later, under Aeschylus and Sophocles, other actors were added to the one introduced in 535 B. C., at least traditionally, by Thespis. The choric circle or orchestra remained the center of action, but eventually, as plays demanded quick changes of masks and costumes and as scene was called for, a stage-house was built tangent to the orchestra, to be used in part as a dressing-room (to replace the older, more remote "hut"), part as a conventional setting. In time, as the chorus became less important, the action moved nearer and nearer to the *skene* or scene-building, which had taken on a colonnaded *proskenion*, a second story, and wings or *paraskenia*. The change was gradual. As

late as 472 B. C., Aeschylus made use of the *thymele* or altar in the middle of the orchestra as a rock to which Prometheus was bound, and fifty years later the orchestra still held much of the action of Aristophanes's comedies, where it was used to represent the Styx or the forum of Cloud-Cuckoo-land.

The front of the scene-building with the grooved columns of the *proskenion*, between which flats or *pinakes*¹ may sometimes have been placed (though there was probably little attempt at any detailed realism in the decoration, in spite of Mr. Lee Simonson's ironic comments to the contrary), was accepted as a temple or palace or city gate or mausoleum, as the play required. After Aeschylus the chorus came to have a smaller and smaller part in the integral action, until in Euripides it was almost completely detached from the dramatic structure. The actors were now often obliged by the conditions of the play to act near the *skene*, and even to pose in tableaux on a low, possibly wheeled platform thrust through the *proskenion*. In the *Agamemnon* of Aeschylus a watchman looks down from a tower. In the *Medea* of Euripides Medea escapes from a rooftop in a winged chariot. These scenes must have taken place on top of the *proskenion*. As the playwrights (or it may have been the audiences or theatre managers, as in later times) insisted upon more and more spectacular complications, machines were introduced. Finally, though not during the great fifth century, most of the action was transferred to the high, narrow platform (eight to twelve feet above the orchestra) in front of the second story of the *skene*. This was the stage of the Hellenistic and Graeco-Roman periods, though the reconstructed theatres have lower stages.

¹*Pinakes* were also used to form the sides of the prismatic *periaktoi* which indicated change of scene. The *periaktoi* were presumably placed near the *paraskenia* of the Greek theatres and in the doorways of the Roman theatres.

Though the true Hellenic theatre had no raised stage, the platform stage had not been unknown. It developed, apparently, in the provinces, where the native mimes and folk farces gave important elements (along with the *comus*—originally a phallic procession or masquerade during a festival) to the comedy. Phylakes, the farcical comedies of Magna Graecia, like the later Latin *Atellanæ*, and the still later *Commedia dell'Arte*, were performed on high platforms. Old Greek comedy, with its elaborate alternation of choric songs and interludes, had some of the structural characteristics of tragedy, but as it got rid of its chorus there was no further reason to use the orchestra circle for acting, and the old platform for players became the accepted form. By the time of Menander, in the late fourth century, comedy needed a much smaller stage. It may be assumed that the change towards the comedy of manners, without a chorus (by far the most popular form of entertainment as Greece declined in power), came before the theatre changed and perhaps led to the smaller theatre, rather than vice versa, because of the sheer inertia of architectural units, though it is certainly possible that the reverse was the case. But in any event, from the time of this Hellenistic theatre until the end of the nineteenth century, the drama ceased to have significant influence on the development of the theatre.

The Roman stage, which was to be superimposed upon some of the Greek theatres during the last centuries B. C., notably the Theatre of Dionysus at Athens, doubtless grew out of the platform stages of the Etruscan mimes, which may have been influenced by the stages of the Phylakes or may, indeed, have been of spontaneous origin. This device for the elevation of the actor above the spectator became the conventional form of the stage, replacing the orchestra-for-acting of Hellenic Greece. In Rome it was a long, rather narrow plat-

form, not more than five feet above the lowest level of the orchestra, in front of a high, architectural façade.

Though native Roman drama was a direct descendant of Greek drama (*e. g.*, in the Menander-like comedies of Terence and Plautus and in the pseudo-Euripidean tragedy of Seneca²), the new structure of the theatres owed little to Greek models. In other words, the physical theatre had a separate development in Italy, going back to the provincial platform stages rather than to the amphitheatre-orchestra for its origin. It is probable that the essentially religious ideal of Greek drama kept the Attic theatre a sacred place and that the vulgar platforms of the provincial mimes did not have the influence that they had in Italy because the Romans never associated religion with the drama.³

In Athens the drama changed very little during three centuries, and the theatre remained a place for dramatic festivals. In Italy, however, other conditions obtained. Lacking a noble indigenous drama and having no reverence for the theatre as a shrine to a god, the Romans had little incentive to keep their dramatic literature unadulterated. The crude native *versus Fescenium* and *satura*, Etruscan phallic celebrations performed by mummers, were outlived by the Atellanæ, improvised farces, with many elements resembling the much later *Commedia dell'Arte*, which became very popular in Rome, and all were supplanted by the mimes, which were ribald farces "presenting scenes from low life and consisting of song, dance, and dialogue," "a combination of ballet and harlequinade."⁴ The mimes, together with the pantomimes, drove out

the last lingering interest in the drama (in the sixth century A. D.). Meanwhile, the theatre, rapidly becoming a place for spectacle, music, and dancing, rather than a place in which dramatic events were enacted, was modified. The Romans of the Empire were a luxurious people. Seeking ease, they built their theatres with comfortable seats which were never very far from the stage (in some of the great Greek theatres spectators had sometimes been as far away as two hundred and fifty feet from the edge of the orchestra), with awnings which could be drawn over the whole edifice in case of rain or hot sun. Their scene-buildings were extravagantly ornamented and had a roof for the stage and, in some instances, a curtain. They delighted in color, noise, sensational productions. It is not strange that the drama did not survive in so delirious a period. But if the Romans were not original in their literature, they had brilliant architects and builders. The theatres, more or less divorced from the drama, were constructed to house spectacles, pageants, and even mimic sea-battles, partly under the influences of the great circuses. The three theatres in Rome, that of Pompey, that of Balbus, and that of Marcellus, are among the finest buildings of a race of splendid builders.

It is important to note that the permanent form of the theatre was determined by topographical conditions, as well as by the character of peoples and the nature of their dramatic compositions. Since conveniently located natural amphitheatres were rarer in Italy than in Greece, the Romans utilized level spaces, and instead of gracefully extended hillside auditoria, built sharply pitched, compact structures, forming single architectural units, economical of space. Theatres became smaller.⁵ It is obvious in

²Senecan tragedies were probably never staged in the days of the Empire.

³Yet in 55 B. C. Pompey was able to build a permanent theatre only by the transparent trick of putting an altar to Venus Victrix at the top of the *cavea* and pretending that the whole was a temple.

⁴James T. Allen, *Stage Antiquities of the Greeks and Romans and Their Influence*, 1927, pp. 24-5.

⁵The Theatre of Dionysus seated between 17,000 and 27,000, according to various estimates; the theatre of Megapolis is supposed to have seated 44,000; the Theatre of Pompey seated about 10,000.

the development of the Roman theatre that the influence of the drama itself on the construction of the buildings was very small.

In other countries the theatre similarly evolved from a separation of audience and performers. Havermeyer, in his *The Drama of Savage Peoples* (1916), points out (p. 177) that in the early drama of all races there is no division between the actors and spectators, that all are actors (dancers, imitators, worshipers). When a division becomes necessary, conscious drama is born, and theatres or spectators' places spring up to house them. Among very slowly changing people such as the Greeks, Japanese, Chinese, and Hindus, the theatre took on a traditional form originally dependent upon the exigencies of the dramatic presentation. Only among the rapidly changing people of Rome and western Europe has the physical structure of the theatre markedly altered. And seldom, as will be seen, have the changes in the theatres been brought about by any important changes in drama itself. The modern theatre is in great part the result of the combined activities of architects, scene-designers, experimenters in light, stage-mechanics, and utilitarian producers. The dramatist has had very little to say about the place which shelters his product.

In China and Japan the plain platform modification of the original front of a temple still persists. The very long plays of the Japanese Kabuki and the Chinese theatres go on with little care for auxiliary machinery or any but conventional decoration. The writers of their plays have not been under any pressure from managers and ingenious stage carpenters to make use of elaborate scenery and wonderful hocus-pocus. In India, too, the unsophisticated fantasies of Kalidasa and the forceful drama of the noble author of *The Little Clay Cart* are presented on daises like those of the rajahs' courts. Here is the ultimate

simplicity combined with thoughtfulness (especially in the Japanese Nō Drama) towards which many dramatists and stage-designers are working today.

Even in the theatres of the Orient, however, may be evidence of the cross-pollination visible in many phenomena of the new and old civilizations.⁶ There is, for instance, a strange resemblance between the Chinese theatre and that of Elizabethan England, as A. E. Zucker has pointed out in his *The Chinese Theatre* (1925). The platform stages of the Phylakes and Atellanæ, together with some traditional characters such as those of Pappus the pantaloön and Maccus, the hunch-backed rogue, the analogue of the Pulcinello of *Commedia dell' Arte*, and perhaps some plots and business, may have been preserved in Constantinople and Asia Minor during the hundreds of years after the supposed death of drama in the sixth century, to reappear in the strolling jugglers and farce players of the Middle Ages and in the *Commedia dell' Arte* of the Renaissance.

During the Middle Ages drama appeared again in new "theatres," once more in simple form fulfilling only the requirements of the dramatic productions. After the fall of the Roman empire the barbarian tribes and the cohorts of Christianity had crushed the decadent Roman stage, scattering the mime actors to the furthest eastern outposts and permitting the theatres to fall in ruins. The platform stages of medieval mystery plays, like the elaborate Roman theatres, may have had their origins in the stages of the Sicilian and Etruscan farces, but they merely re-established the form, and became the type of all European theatres only until the revival of interest in the past during the Renaissance. The church, in which the

⁶As a matter of fact, Oriental drama is of comparatively recent origin. The drama of India dates from about the fifth century A. D., that of China from the thirteenth (though there was near-dramatic ceremony before the time of Aeschylus), and that of Japan from the fifteenth. (From Sheldon Cheney, *The Theatre*, 1929.)

new drama developed, was a complete theatre in itself, with separation between actor and spectator and a more or less ornamental setting, ideally adapted to the presentation of the dramatic sacrifice of the mass. In a sense it was the first known roofed-over theatre (with the exception of court halls in India and Persia and the banquet-hall platforms of the scops and jongleurs of so-called Dark and Middle Ages).

When the tropes of the liturgical drama became secularized by the introduction of alien elements, the place of presentation moved first to the church steps and finally into the market-places, where it assimilated the stage of the wandering acrobats, dancers, and animal trainers. The multiple-mansion stages of France in the Middle Ages were created out of the form of the dramas given in them. Just as in the Greek theatre it was conventional to assume that a person coming from the audience's left was coming from the city, so it was conventional to place heaven at stage left and hell at stage right, with the various "mansions," representing stations in Biblical stories or in the progress of man, between. This was a very elementary adaptation of the platform stage, cognate, no doubt, with the convention of the doorways in the façades of the Roman theatres, each marking an entrance to the dwelling of one of the players. The presence of the "platea" or neutral platform ("anywhere"), found in the Welch and English as well as the continental productions of mysteries, was an important step in the development of the unlocalized stage of later periods. It has its cognates in the stages of the Japanese and Chinese. The pageant wagons of the trade guilds in England were a special form of the multiple mansion stage. The wagon stage itself has long been known as a stage machine, from the *ecceklema* of the Greeks to the pageant trucks of seventeenth century French masques, down to the huge

wagon stages of some of our great modern theatres.

It is still apparent that the nature of the dramatic presentation, though perhaps responsible for the original form of the theatre, really has small part in the subsequent changes in that theatre. The medieval mysteries and miracles, dealing with stories of the Old and New Testaments, were easily taken care of on the established stages. Elaborations of fire and brimstone from the mouth of hell, real boats floating on miniature Seas of Galilee, and so on were in all probability the additions of ambitious producers. Their innovations suggested others to the playwrights, and the process was continued, but the main burden of change seems to be on the designer.

During the Renaissance the classical or pseudo-classical theatre after the Roman architects, or what sixteenth century Italians thought were the ideas of Roman architects, and the native platform stage (with its mansions and suggestions of decoration) came into contact. Other types of theatres added their influences: the masque and opera stages of the English and continental aristocracy, possibly the corral theatre of the Spaniards, and the apron stage of the English public playhouses. The result was the singular hybrid theatre of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

The place of dramatic form in this gigantic tangle of contributions by artists, architects, choreographers, pragmatic managers, and arrogant aristocrats, is a feeble one. In general, it may be said that plays were adapted to the available stages, rather than that stages were adapted to the plays. An exception must be made in the case of masques, which were usually little more than detailed directions for spectacular stage productions. That is, the masques often determined the structure of their stages. Since, however, masques were nearly always held in the great halls of

palaces, they gave rise to no theatre buildings, though they did exert profound influence on stage-design. For the rest, English plays, from the moralities and the interludes of Heywood and Sir Thomas Moore to the rich verse of Marlowe, from the blood and thunder of Kyd to the depth and grandeur of Shakespeare, from the Senecan crudity of *Gorboduc* to the technical perfection of *The White Devil*, were played with little influence on the physical theatre on the apron stages of the inn-yards and public playhouses.⁷ In France, the modified mansion stages of the Hotel Bourgogne and the Marais, later changing to the single scene, in which the wings were concealed by flats, served for the seventeenth century traveling *Commedia dell'Arte* Companies as well as for Corneille's *Cid* (many of whose scenes are rather confusingly unlocalized) and Moliere's comedies. In Italy the *Commedia dell'Arte* companies moved indoors from their street platforms, playing on stages decorated according to Serlio's idea of the street or comic scene of Vitruvius's Rome.

The physical theatre, indeed, developed without much regard for national characteristics of plays. Early Italian Renaissance theatres devoted to Roman comedies had simplified multiple stages with doors labeled to indicate the dwellings of the people of the plays. Later, however, in a pretty confusion of the ruins of old Roman theatres, the writings of Vitruvius, Serlio's interpretation of Vitruvius, and the genius

⁷The traps and "heavens" and mechanical effects demanded in plays brought changes in the physical theatre, it is true. These problems, however, were met in every period without affecting the prevailing structures. In Greece, for example, tunnels were sometimes built from the *skene* to the center of the orchestra. In the Middle Ages there were tunnels between the Gates of Heaven and Hell Mouth. Gods spoke from the tops of the *proskenion* (or perhaps from a still higher place above the second story of the *skene*) and were lifted down with cranes. Angels and demons appeared suspended above the medieval stages.

of the architects, Palladio and Scamozzi, theatres were built without any consideration of contemporary fashions in the drama. First came the Olympic Theatre at Parma in 1584 and then the Farnese Theatre in Vicenza in 1618, modifying the facade of the Roman theatre so that it had passageways running back in perspective and then shrinking the facade to the central portal, behind which architectural setting stood in perspective. This was the beginning of the theatre of the proscenium arch, which, adapted and improved by Inigo Jones in England, and architects like the Bibienas and Burnacini on the continent, never had anything to do with the modern form of drama. It was the application of an architect's problem to the theatre.

In England the open theatre, flexible in its handling of socially divided classes and in its apron stage, inner room, and balcony, which suited the conditions of almost any play, gradually changed under the influence of the covered private theatres and the court productions to which Inigo Jones devoted most of his attention. The theatres of the late seventeenth century both in England and on the continent, though the form of the drama had not materially changed, were built with prosceniums and wide aprons, the old inner stage now coming out to the proscenium. Flats sliding in grooves and drops painted in perspective masked the wings and back of the stage. The auditorium took on the Italian horseshoe shape. In essential details this was the modern theatre. Its form had been determined by architects' visions of the Roman theatre and by stages suited to the productions of opera, masques, and ballets, rather than by the plays of Shakespeare, Fletcher, Congreve, Racine, Molière, and other writings which make up what we know today as dramatic literature.

The theatre of the eighteenth century had come a long way from the simple place-

for-performers, place-for-spectators arrangement of original dramatic forms. The platform stage of the Phylakes, of the mysteries, of the interludes had become a great stage-house, filled with complicated machinery. The roughly painted back-cloth of the *Commedia dell'Arte* and the bare conventionalization of the English inn-yard stage, the French tennis-court stage, and the Spanish "corral" stage had become elaborately decorated flats, wings, borders, and backdrops, to which the laws of perspective had been lavishly applied in the interest of reality. Instead of the sun, candles and oil lamps were used. The old pit for groundlings, surrounded by galleries, had become an orchestra, surrounded by boxes. The supposed progress of manners was wholly succeeding in cluttering up the theatre with every kind of extravagant apparatus and decoration so that drama was subordinated to mechanical gadgets and painted scenery. It was a time of literary dearth, so far as the theatre was concerned, but the land flowed with milk and honey for scene-designers, managers, and actors. The plays of Goldsmith and Sheridan, Voltaire and Diderot, were performed on stages that conformed to the artistic tastes of men very little interested in great drama. Audiences wanted showy scenery, gorgeous costumes, famous actors and actresses, rhetorical declamation, color, sight, rant, rather than good plays well acted. They liked a Garrick or a Schroder or a Lecouvreur acting in an "adapted" version of Shakespeare, a frail comedy of Lessing, a formal tragedy in the manner of Racine, or better still one of the ephemeral products of the day. The play was anything but the thing.

During the changes in the physical theatre which, as has been pointed out, were brought about by other than literary forces, the drama itself had undergone changes, some of them the result of merely popular taste, but for the most part following the

changes in intellectual, moral, and social thought from one period to another. In other words, the theatre and drama, as closely associated as the domestic dwelling and the family unit occupying it, have not developed with equal pace nor for the same reasons. The men who build our theatres are never the men who write our plays, whatever Gordon Craig may think about the desirability of the architect-designer-playwright-régisseur. The problems of the theatre-builder and stage-designer, crowded by custom and false classical ideals and the vast inertia of architectural structure, are quite different from those of the playwright, who has a much more flexible medium in which to work and who deals in words and ideas, instead of in stone and metal and wood.

During the golden period of Greece the simplicity and nobility of the Greek spirit was reflected not only in its epic and tragic poetry, but also in its architecture. From that time until the fall of Rome, as life grew more complex, literature and architecture went in different directions. The Romans, the great builders of antiquity, had a tremendous influence on the construction of theatre-buildings, still apparent today. They never achieved the simple beauty of Greek buildings; indeed, their architecture, along with their literature, moved rapidly towards the over-ornate, mannered, and decadent. Nevertheless, the Roman theatre, in its evolution through the *Teatro Olimpico* to the *La Scala Opera House*, was more suited to the needs of modern audiences than the great Greek amphitheatres, enclosing the acting space on three sides.⁸ At the same time that the Romans were learning how to make roads, aqueducts, strong legal systems, and satirical poetry, they were being less successful

⁸Today, it is true, theatre-builders occasionally experiment with the completely plastic stage. Max Reinhardt's circus-stage and Norman Bel Geddes's space stage are illustrations in point.

in creating drama. The poorest play of Euripides is worth all of Seneca's gory tragedies. Yet when the past was rediscovered in the fifteenth century, Roman plays as well as Roman theories of architecture were held in reverent respect, Greek plays being as yet unknown. On the whole, in spite of the evils introduced into the theatre by Italian interpreters of Latin ideas of building, especially by the concept of perspective, Renaissance theatres were better than plays written on Roman models (such as *Ralph Roister-Doister*, *Gorboduc*, and the plays of Ariosto).

Then came the re-discovery of Aristotle in the sixteenth century and the issuing of the rules about "classical unities" by Castelvetro. The effect of the pontifical theories of men like Castelvetro and Scaliger was to force drama into an artificial mold from which, in France at least, it did not begin to escape until the nineteenth century. English dramatists were far too bold and resourceful to be constrained by arbitrary rules. The pseudo-classical spirit of the Renaissance, coming late to England (though there were men like Philip Sidney and Ben Jonson who agreed with the French and Italian scholars), did not overwhelm the native independence of the writers as it did in France and Italy. Dramatic literature, then, was marked (on the continent) by one set of classical documents; theatrical architecture by another. But the drama, except in England, was held in check far longer than the theatre, which, under the impetus of Vitruvius's book, through Serlio's translation and interpretation and Palladio's and the Bibienas' inspiration, advanced and retrogressed in queer bounds. The changes in the theatre and the changes in the drama had taken place quite independently of each other.

In England the drama was the natural outgrowth of the mystery plus the chron-

icle play, with some infusion of classical and continental ideas and forms. It was, however, completely English, as it has remained to this day, in spite of such influences as the novel, German morbid romanticism, French and Russian realism, and expressionism. The theatre-building, on the other hand, though it began as a thoroughly English structure, took on most of the characteristics of Italian theatres. Victor Albright makes out a case for the survival of the Elizabethan stage in the Restoration stage, which he says is the apron and inner stage of the public playhouses, rather than the proscenium stage borrowed from Italy.⁹ Whether or not this is true, the whole effect of the Restoration theatre, with horseshoe-shaped auditorium, stage-boxes, and flats moving in grooves in front of a painted backdrop, is definitely Italian.

It is pertinent here to comment that the drama has a clear ancestry. Though at times the offspring may have seemed illegitimate, especially during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, when "adaptations," "dog-dramas," and ridiculous vehicles for merely spectacular or merely histrionic presentation were common, the concept of drama has nearly always remained pure. Long periods have passed without the appearance of great plays, partly, no doubt, because popular taste was overwhelmingly satisfied with the ephemeral and vulgar. But truly great drama continues to be endemic. The theatre, on the other hand, is of dubious ancestry. Through its main line of development it has been at the mercy of ignorant architects, an importunate caste system (which has never really affected great plays, one way or the other, except possibly during the Restoration period in England), and scene designers who have not understood the difference between na-

⁹See also Allardyce Nicoll, *The Development of the Theatre*, p. 168.

ture and the holding up of a mirror to nature. The influence, moreover, of opera, the ballet, masques, music halls, geographical, financial, and social conditions, and the greed of men has been very great.

During the first two-thirds of the nineteenth century there was no advance over the preceding century in either the theatre or the drama. The gradual encroachment of realism on the essential poetry of drama led to precise stage settings and well-made plays. The careful imitation of daily life, both in the dramatic conflicts of playwrights like Scribe, Sardou, Robertson, Pinero, and Fitch and in the settings of Antoine, Duke George of Meiningen, and Belasco, led to the artistic cul-de-sac of naturalism.

The awakening came first in the revolutionary minds of scene designers. Dissatisfied with the traditional "environment" of plays, inspired by new discoveries in lighting and the physics of color and acoustics, challenged by the inwardness and un-reality of plays that thoughtful men in all generations believed to be great, they experimented with simplification and plasticity of settings, and through them, eventually, even the theatre-buildings were changed. Meanwhile, of course, the drama too was changing. The early well-made realism of Ibsen took on poetical symbolism as his mind grew. Romanticism lost some of its sentiment and became conceited and fantastic, as in Rostand and Maeterlinck. Naturalism turned towards impressionism and expressionism. The theatre, still, as always, under the domination of the box-office, grew closer to the drama it housed. For the first time since the period between Thespis and Menander, theatre-builders, scene-designers, directors, and playwrights saw eye to eye. This renaissance of dramatic art was by no means an isolated phenomenon: it took place in all the arts. The interdependence of music, painting, sculpture, poetry, archi-

ture, and drama is a tremendously interesting thing, and it is important in the study of the theatre, though I shall not attempt to deal with it here.

The almost simultaneous rebirth of the "art theatre" and what Allardyce Nicoll calls poetic drama was both independent and interdependent. It would be hard to say now whether the new staging and directing led to the new drama or that the new drama led to the new stage-design. Of course, in some measure, each contributed to the development of the other. One might venture to guess, however, by the example of the past, that staging and theatre-plans might have changed whatever plays were written. As a matter of fact, the new staging was based in no small part on the plays of preceding periods—on Marlowe, Shakespeare, Goethe, Dante, Schiller, and Goldoni. Yet Appia, a pioneer in the movement, based his theories of plastic stage-design on the iconoclastic opera of Wagner. Gordon Craig, a disciple of Appia, went back to Shakespeare to illustrate his theories of integrated environment of the drama, though he also worked on Maeterlinck and Ibsen. Stage-designers today find constant challenge in the work of men like O'Neill, Rice, the Capeks, Andreyev, and Pirandello.

In short, interesting new plays were written all over the world during this period of renaissance, by Shaw, Hauptmann, Chekhov, Gorky, Strindberg, Claudel, Schnitzler, Synge, Werfel, and others, and at the same time Craig, Jessner, Fuchs, Copeau, Reinhardt, Rouché, Meyerhold, and Bakst were introducing new ideas about stylizing, conventionalizing, or simplifying the stage and stage decoration. Now, more than ever before, the plays seem to come before the décor: the designer sincerely studies the particular play he is mounting and gives to it a style which contributes to a newly sought unity of effect in which all elements, acting, setting, costumes, direct-

ing, share. In the past the setting has nearly always been planned without real concern about its inward harmony with the play. Expressionistic plays now find homogeneous stage designs; fanciful plays find appropriate setting; the arbitrary, tradition-smashing plays of the Soviet dramatists and régisseurs find suitable mounting in the work of Evreinoff and Meyerhold. Theatres are built without boxes and ignominious galleries (and stages are radically redesigned), though the commercial theatre, in the main, keeps the old forms. Max Littmann was one of the first to break with the standard model of the Italian theatre; Copeau tried a formal architectural stage, Fuchs a so-called relief stage, in which the playing area was very shallow, Bel Geddes a space stage; Reinhardt used a circus stage, surrounded on three sides by the audience; Meyerhold abandoned all concealment of the flies, wings, and walls of the stage-house. Little Theatres, unaffected by commercial expediency, with good sight lines, large stages, comfortable seats, and excellent equipment, spring up everywhere. Gingerbread decoration, horseshoe-shaped balconies, and painted scenery have become old-fashioned.

Meanwhile, writers, only vaguely concerned with the kind of theatre or setting in which their work is to be played, are saying what they have to say in terms of the new internationalism or the new decadence or the new romanticism or the new psychology or the new thoughtful melancholy or the new sociology. There is, indeed, a wider understanding than there used to be of the interrelationship of the arts and even a feeling, perhaps due to the stimulation of Craig, that the theatre is a great orchestra made up of many instruments, of which the playwright is only one. The future influence, one way or the other, of dramatic composition upon dramatic production and theatre design will unquestionably be closer

than it has been in the past, but each will, probably, continue to develop independently, in direct proportion as the conditions of literature are different from the conditions of sculpture and architecture. The perfect orchestral plan of the theatre, under the domination of a great régisseur, may be desirable and perhaps achievable, but it will come only when great drama is less literary, stage-design less self-consciously "arty," and actors and directors less mercenary and philistine than they are today.

ARGUS TRESIDDER

"WINGS FOR THE MARTINS"

The quandary created by Jimmy's report card, the family furore over Barbara's "homework," the problems of Patricia's preparation for college, these and the many other real and daily "dramas" that education introduces to millions of Americans in their homes, schools, and communities will be aired 9:30 to 10:00 p. m. every Wednesday night beginning November 16. Prepared and presented by the Office of Education, United States Department of the Interior, the series will be produced with the co-operation of the National Congress of Parents and Teachers, and the National Broadcasting Company.

Wings for the Martins is the title of the new Blue network series. It succeeds *Education in the News*, a weekly program presented by the Office of Education in co-operation with the National Broadcasting Company for more than four years, and the weekly half-hour series of radio programs presented by the National Congress of Parents and Teachers. The seven initial programs will be: 1, Jimmy Runs Away, November 16; 2, Children Are Persons! November 23; 3, Everybody Joins a Club, November 30; 4, Let's Give Them Books, December 7; 5, Keeping the Family Well, December 14; 6, She Hasn't a Thing to Wear! December 21; 7, No Fun at Home? December 28.