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*Northwest*  
**THEATRE**  
REVIEW

Volume 4

1996

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## NORTHWEST THEATRE REVIEW

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## Gut Reaction: Sarah Daniels's *Gut Girls* in Havre, Montana

J. K. CURRY

**"T**he *Gut Girls*?! Who would ever go to see something called *The Gut Girls*?" This reaction from a marketing student to our proposed fall theatre production was the first clue I was no longer in New York City. In fact, I was at Montana State University—Northern in Havre, Montana, where, it sometimes seemed to me, more people had firm opinions about what should be going on in the theatre than had actually ever seen a play. Several additional comments in a similar vein from the marketing students, along with the wry faces that greeted my explanation that much of the action was set in the gutting shed of a slaughterhouse, confirmed the impression that *The Gut Girls* would be a tough sell. In fact, the professor for the marketing course, after a year of seeking to arrange a project with the college theatre, abruptly canceled the involvement of his class with the production, citing his concern that the students could not be successful with such a project.

"Well, that's interesting," I thought, "and I haven't even told them yet that it's a FEMINIST play." At that point, marketing class participation or not, our small theatre program had made a commitment to producing *The Gut Girls*. However, I realized it was possible to substitute the word "fun" for "feminist" in most discussions of the play and determined the best course was to let the feminist themes speak for themselves in performance. The decision was also made to include a "mature subject matter" warning on posters and in press releases. This was done despite the fact that the mature themes were not treated in a pointedly offensive or even explicit manner.

As it happens, *The Gut Girls* is one of the less controversial works by the contemporary British playwright, Sarah Daniels. Plays by Daniels include *Neptune*, about a lesbian mother's custody battle; *Masterpieces*, which argues that there is a strong connection between pornography and violence against women; and *Beside Herself*, concerned with sexual abuse and denial. A major

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A scene from *The Gut Girls* performed at Montana State University—Northern.

concern of *The Gut Girls* is the effect of gender and class on employment and other options in life. The girls of the gutting shed are a spirited bunch, who make a decent living but endure deplorable working conditions and disdain or ridicule from much of the rest of society. An upper class woman, Lady Helena, decides to take on the gut girls as a philanthropic venture. Besides campaigning for changes in their work environment, Lady Helena is determined to improve the gut girls' manners and morals. Complications ensue, most notably when the girls lose their gutting shed jobs and Lady Helena attempts to retrain them for positions as domestic servants. During the course of the play the audience learns something of the lives of the individual gut girls including Ellen, the would-be union organizer, and Annie, who lost her first job as a domestic when she became pregnant by the master's son. Another gut girl, Maggie, fends off an attack from one of Lady Helena's male friends and later settles for a marriage of convenience when she is unable to find work. Still another gut girl, Polly, ends up in jail for punching her employer, rather than be hit by a man who regularly abused both wife and servants. The episodic play, while humorous throughout, leaves the audience with many serious issues to contemplate.

As we prepared for our production of *The Gut Girls*, we had two concerns. One, that we would not have an audience, and two, that the audience would not approve of the play. There was some reason to be concerned about local reaction. By way of background, MSU—Northern is a small college, known primarily for its technical degree programs and not offering a theatre major. With a remote, small town location, the college's theatre is just about the only show in town. When I had been interviewed for the theatre position at MSU—Northern two years ago, the search committee asked questions about how I might be able to consider community standards when selecting plays. The chair of the Department of Humanities and Social Sciences followed this up by promising to back me if any community members objected to my play selections. Further discussion revealed that when one of my predecessors presented David Mamet's *Glengarry Glen Ross* (a few years before the movie was made), she not only received angry letters after the fact but was threatened with a picket outside the theatre when word got out about the play's strong language.

Knowing this, I did not deliberately want to provoke a hostile reaction in the community. Certainly, for me and my new theatre colleague, Mark Seiffert (hired this year), consideration over whether to attempt *The Gut Girls* and concern about local reaction raised the issue of the role of theatre within this particular setting, along with the troubling reality of self-censorship. Both Mark and I had experience doing theatre and seeing theatre at larger schools and in bigger cities. It felt strange to be discarding scripts suddenly for reasons such as too many "bad words"—especially when the language did not actually offend either of us. Reality demanded some concessions to our environment. Still, rather than cave in completely, we decided to produce *The Gut Girls* and test the boundaries of community standards. After my cautious

first season, it was time to offer a good play that could be considered adventurous for Havre.

The reaction of the cast provided an early indication that the play might, in fact, find a sympathetic audience. At the early rehearsals, cast members were primarily concerned with clarifying the dramatic action, made difficult by the unfamiliar historical setting, local references, and British turns of phrase. Soon, however, spontaneous discussions of the many issues touched on in the play began among cast members. On several occasions, actors remained past the scheduled end of a rehearsal to discuss topics, such as domestic abuse or employment opportunities for women, and to consider how present conditions or attitudes might differ from those of the era in which the play was set. The engagement of the actors with the challenging material confirmed my impression that *The Gut Girls* was worth attempting in Havre—if for no other reason than the education of the participating students.

We finally reached our performance dates and to my relief we did find an audience, including an overflow crowd on the student discount night. To my delight the audience laughed and applauded—and did not storm out in the middle. They were more responsive to the play's feminist themes than I had anticipated, actually cheering when Polly decked her boss. Still, in order to receive more feedback than just crowd response, we surveyed our audiences, encouraging everyone to fill out a brief questionnaire after each performance.

Reading the responses we learned that we had, in deed, managed to offend a portion of our audience. Perhaps the most extreme response seemed to be a reaction against our doing any play involving serious themes or social issues. A woman wrote,

I don't need my social conscience raised when I go out to enjoy the evening. Even though I'm from small, insignificant Montana, I am aware of man's inhumanity to man, animal and earth. I read the paper, listen to the news, and am perfectly aware of the current, past, and predicted future social ills and atrocities committed by man. I would simply enjoy a light, entertaining production. It was a practice in the past to do one entertaining play a year, until it became the goal of 'superior' 'big city' directors to bring culture and enlightenment to Montana hicks.

So, at least one spectator viewed our choice of play as an affront to the local community. A couple other respondents were displeased, not so much because the play brought up serious issues, but because the particular issues annoyed them. According to one audience member, "...the ax of women's rights and workers' rights is worn out from excessive grinding."

A student asked to write a review for Introduction to Theatre responded in the same vein. In fact, his anger at the feminist agenda of the play prevented him from actually discussing the production at all. He stated,

The main theme of the play, the repression of women, has been done over and over again. Ok we get the message women want to be treated as equals, fine. So what is the problem? ...one possible solution for women and other beset minorities is to get up off their collective asses and make some changes for themselves individually instead of crying to the goddamn government every time someone discriminates against their little club. ... What is more if that person does not make it only that person is to blame, not me, or anyone else, just that person.

This response convinced me that we probably needed to do more feminist drama.

Several respondents seemed to be reacting, not against feminism *per se*, but against the representation of any values or views other than their own. Most of the negative feedback concerned language and themes which the respondents deemed as offensive to Christianity. Presumably the most responsible for provoking this response was one in which Lady Helena attempts to teach a bible lesson to the girls who, after a long work day, prefer to joke with each other. Much to their credit, about half of the respondents who criticized the language or the less-than-reverent view of Christianity, did not completely dismiss the play on that basis. One woman who wrote, "I do not enjoy hearing the taking of the Lord's name in vain," also noted that the issues were portrayed well. Another woman wrote, "The language didn't have to be so harsh. Instead of God or Jesus, couldn't other names or words have been used." But, she also commented that, "It was a good play—had a good message." Another audience member insisted, "the light treatment of Jesus was very offensive—almost blasphemy on who He is, our Savior. I cringe over the mockery," she noted, "rewrite the play." Yet, she also described *The Gut Girls* as "...a good play on fighting for the rights of the labor force." Unlike one or two respondents who vowed not to return to our theatre, these audience members were able to register their complaints, yet still find something of value in the play.

Even more encouraging was the fact that fewer than one in ten of the audience members who took the trouble to fill out a survey gave us a negative review. Many responded quite favorably to the issues raised by the play. Comments included, "Great way to sensitize us to women's plight at that time;" "loved the interest with women's rights;" "The play dealt with issues that are close to my heart, domestic abuse, women as second class citizens;" "...raised good questions and made you think;" "interesting/disturbing/thought provoking;" and "I liked what it had to say and the women's issues raised." Others noted, "These are some very real issues of child labor and the plight of the poor. These problems continue today." Also, "...historical theme but some issues that are still faced in the modern world. Power to the people." And finally, a simple political analysis: "I'm liberal... I liked it."

Though not a precisely quantitative measure of crowd reaction, the survey did allow us the opportunity to become better acquainted with our audience. And, we were encouraged by what we learned. The positive response from a solid majority of the college students and members of the wider Havre community who attended *The Gut Girls* suggests we have an audience for serious contemporary plays, even plays with a strong feminist perspective. Although some deference to perceived local standards in explicitness of language and subject matter will continue to inform our play selection decisions, the experience of producing *The Gut Girls* has given us the confidence to plan to stretch our audience with at least some of our future endeavors.

## The Gue Hin Chou: Portland's Chinese Theatre

ALLEN J. ADAMS

During the last half of the 19th Century, Portland, Oregon became a major center and refuge for immigrant Chinese on the West Coast. Thousands of the Celestials, as they were called, had come to the United States seeking their fortunes in the gold mines of California and later Oregon. Like other forty-niners who came from all over the world in search of great wealth, most of the Chinese did not strike it rich. Disappointed by their failure in the gold fields, many drifted north to the Willamette Valley, where there was a need for cheap labor. Many found work clearing land for agricultural purposes. Some worked as commercial cooks, domestics, gardeners, or laundrymen, while others found work as laborers on the railroads and in the mines of the Northwest.

The construction of Western railroads in the 1860's and 1870's created the need of an abundant labor force. Since there was no great pool of indigenous labor at hand, Chinese were hired on the spot, or brought to the U.S. as contract labor to meet the demand. These hard working Chinese laborers dug tunnels and laid track for the Central Pacific through the Sierra Nevadas. It was their hard work that enabled the Central Pacific to win its race with the Union Pacific in construction of the trans-continental railroad. Later, many of the Chinese were contracted to work on the construction of Oregon railroads, and still later they were hired, under similar contracts, to work in the fish canneries of the Pacific Northwest.

The earliest report of Chinese in Portland is a reference to a Tong Sung who founded a boarding house and restaurant on Second Avenue in 1851.<sup>1</sup> There is however, no further mention of him or his boarding house. Nevertheless, Portland's Chinese community continued to grow. Soon thousands of Chinese were crowded into the area near the Willamette River. Fish markets, laundries, an assortment of exotic shops and eateries were concentrated along Second Avenue between Oak and Yamhill. Night and day

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Chinatown resounded with the voices of the Celestials as they gossiped, bartered, and conducted all manner of business along the street.

The need for cheap labor to build railroads and clear farm land insured the arrival of more and more Chinese. After 1868, when the French ship, "Jennie Alice," disembarked 430 contract laborers from Hong Kong, ships made regular runs between the south coast of China and Portland to meet labor needs in the Northwest.<sup>2</sup> Like most of the people who came to the United States in the nineteenth century, the Chinese brought with them their own culture. By the 1870's Portland's Chinese population had reached 3,390, though only 90 were women.<sup>3</sup> It was a fair sized population, and like the rest of the population, in need of cultural institutions of its own. One such institution was the theatre, which in China was often a focal point for social exchange.

It was not until 1872, however, that any mention is made of a Chinese theatre in Portland. On November 11, 1872, on page three *The Oregonian* reported the assertion of an "up country paper" that Portland had a Chinese theatre. However, the rest of the article went on to deny the idea most strongly, "We repel the basic insinuation. The idea is shocking, to compare a Joss Temple to a Theatre." The comment was an allusion to the fact that Joss Temples were often used to perform ritualistic ceremonies that often appeared to Westerners as theatrical in nature.

Shocking as the idea may have been to *The Oregonian*, two months later on January 23, 1873 it printed, again on page three, the following: "Portland has a Chinese Verity theatre. The company consists of three males and one female. The auditorium was well filled last night." *The Oregonian's* somewhat derogatory reports on these cultural activities gives credence to the regularity with which performances were held. "The Chinese Concerts on Sunday evenings are attended by a large audience of Celestials, who gamble and absorb at the same time, stratus more delicious than the notes of ten thousand cats, pigs, and tin pans combined."<sup>4</sup> *The Oregonian* reporter's fondness for the strains of a Chinese orchestra didn't improve as the year wore on. "Their is no change in the program at the Chinese Opera House. Persons passing the institution on Alder Street are probably aware of the fact."<sup>5</sup> In spite of the critical commentary of *The Oregonian* reporter, the "Opera House" survived through at least the winter of 1874. On March 7, 1874, page three, the paper announced the opening of a new theatrical season. "The Chinese Opera House has reopened for a new season of \_ [sic] weeks." Though the season opened, there was no further comment on it in the extant newspapers of the day. There seems to be no evidence that this or any other Chinese theatre continued in operation between the spring of 1874 and 1878.

Though this first theatrical attempt did not seem to have survived, without a doubt, Portland's growing Chinese community on Second Avenue was intent on maintaining its cultural heritage, and the Theatre was an essential part of that heritage. To this end, in 1878, a group of Chinese businessmen succeeded in leasing Portland's Oro Fino Theatre for the purpose of presenting

Chinese plays. Unfortunately, the theatre was destroyed by fire, pre-empting the performances. It was not until 1879 that a new theatre, the Gue Hin Chou, was established at Second and Alder.<sup>6</sup> Two other Chinese theatres were established during the 1880's along Second, but neither of them proved as successful as the Gue Hin Chou.<sup>7</sup>

The Gue Hin Chow was constructed on the second floor of a building located on the northeast corner of the intersection at Second and Alder. A stage about three feet high and measuring about twenty feet deep and fifty feet wide was constructed along the west wall, with a number of stalls constructed along the remaining walls, while in the center, facing the stage, were placed a number of wooden benches. Entrance to the theatre was gained via a staircase which opened on Second Avenue.<sup>8</sup>

For the fall of 1880 Goung Ye Lung, the agent and part owner of the Gue Hin Chou, announced that the theatre had been leased to Hop Wick and Company of San Francisco. The company of players, numbering some forty artists, set sail from San Francisco on the ship, "Elder," for Portland on August 10, 1880 hoping to open the following week.<sup>9</sup> Though they arrived in Astoria in good time, they seemed to have encountered difficulties making their way up river to the City of Roses. It was not until the nineteenth of August that the company was able to stage its first performance in Portland.<sup>10</sup> On August 20, 1880, an article appeared discussing the "peculiarities" of the previous night's performance.

Their theatres are very much like American institutions of the same kind as far as the auditorium is concerned, but in the stage and appurtenances there is a marked dissimilarity. They have no drop curtain, no scenery except for a stationary partition with two doors, one for exit and one for entrance. The stage—is about twenty by fifty feet. Against the partition is placed paraphernalia required during the play, and in an alcove at the center of the stage is the orchestra. The trappings are of rich design, red and bright yellow being the predominant colors. The auditorium is fitted with seats on a gradual incline towards the back of the house, and a gallery runs around the room, with six boxes adjoining the stage.<sup>11</sup>

One section of the gallery seemed to have been set aside for women to be seated separately. The performance of the play entitled, *The Treaty Between the Six Asiatic Nations*, began at four p.m. and lasted until past midnight. The performance was evidently quite a surprise to the writer, embracing "every shade of acting from light comedy to heavy tragedy," with its inclusion of "gymnastic exercises" sandwiched between "histrionic scenes." It was all accompanied by an orchestra, that was to say the least, much louder than that used in an American theatre. In actuality he stated, "The ensembles playing were a happy medium between the sounds of two pigs under a gate and the melody of a bottle factory with the slight preponderance of the latter." *The Oregonian* critic went on in his review to describe the various conventions of Chinese Opera such as make-up, costume, the playing of women's roles by men and the peculiarity of dead characters walking on the stage. With good humor he finally stated, "Taken all in all the [sic] Chinamen's performances must be recorded as a grand financial and artistic success."<sup>12</sup>

In his review *The Oregonian* reporter also offered these comments about the differences between Western and Chinese theatre.

The Chinese theatre differs from the New Market (theatre) because the performances began on time; the actors knew their lines and their cues and also knew how to act. There were no quarrels between the leading lady and the soubrette, and the star and the leading man; there were no bouquets bought by members of the company and sent to themselves by the usher;—there were no tedious waits between the acts, but there were some tedious acts between the waits; and lastly, the orchestra was much louder.<sup>13</sup>

The company continued to perform into the new year, though not always to the approval of the Chinese audience. One such occasion occurred in mid September, when a disturbance at the Chinese Theatre was recorded. There seems to have been a substitution of a different play for the one that had been announced and the Chinese audience, considering themselves bilked, became very angry. They finally became so furious that knives and pistols were drawn and an attack was about to be “launched upon the stage” when several police officers arrived, quelled the angry crowd and prevented bloodshed.<sup>14</sup>

The history of the ethnic Chinese theatre in Portland was, especially in its early years, fraught with ups and downs. Artistic triumphs were recorded on a number of occasions as well as disasters. One early success occurred on August 25, 1880, when Goung Ye Lung, as agent for the theatre, presented, direct from the Royal Theatre, Peking China, the renowned Chinese acrobats Ah Toon and Gim Toon. The performance was heavily advertised among the white community as well as in Chinatown. This event attracted a fair number of the larger white community who seemed to have responded enthusiastically to the performance. This Portland success was the Toon’s first stop on an American tour.<sup>15</sup> However, not all Portlanders were enthusiastic about the existence of the theatre on Second Avenue. *The Evening Telegram* stated:

The residents within three blocks of the Chinese theatre are complaining about the eternal din and racket kicked up by the entertainers every night, Sundays included. It is kept up until after 2 o’clock in the morning, it is claimed and makes the night hideous.<sup>16</sup>

In addition a petition was presented to the Common Council on September 1, 1880, from T. Dowling and others, asking the council, “...to prohibit by ordinance the beating of gongs at the Chinese Theatre, corner of Second and Alder streets.” On this occasion the city council seems to have felt the problem to be adequately addressed by the theatre ordinance it was then considering. The petition was placed on file, and the City Council proceeded to the ordinance regulating “...Theatricals and other Exhibitions in the City of Portland” which was read twice and approved.<sup>17</sup> However, this was a problem that was, on a number of future occasions, to be brought before the city council.

However, the Gue Hin Chou faced a much greater threat in February, 1881, when Coung Ye Lung & Co. failed financially. Lee Sam, the Portland partner and one of the most respected and oldest residents of the Chinese community disappeared and his Chinese and American creditors filed writs of attachments against his properties, which included the theatre. In addition he had failed to pay the Chinese acting company as well. Lee Sam’s partners in the theatre venture also had their establishments attached and

physically occupied by Sheriff Buchtel and his deputies.<sup>18</sup> This interrupted performances at the theatre for some time. Lee Sam, who was for a while thought to have committed suicide, was eventually arrested in British Columbia “for obtaining money under false pretence from the Bank of British Columbia.”<sup>19</sup>

By the fall of 1881 the theatre under new management was back in operation but once again was faced with complaints. This time the complaint came to the city council from the Chinese Mission School “asking that the Chinese Theatre be closed at 12 p.m. and on Sundays.”<sup>20</sup> The complaint was placed on file, to be referred to the proper council committee. Unfortunately, it did not die there, and on September 29 the committee on Health and Police proposed an ordinance closing all theatres at midnight. Pressure was soon brought on the council to include all places of entertainment in a closing law. Finally, on October 19, 1881 a new ordinance was read for the third time in council and passed.

The city of Portland does ordain as follows. That all theatres, saloons, or other public places of amusement when pianos or other musical instruments are played shall be closed between the hours of twelve o’clock midnight and seven o’clock in the morning.<sup>21</sup>

Provisions were included to fine the owners of these entertainment establishments, from a minimum of ten dollars to a maximum of fifty, and revocation of license. In addition, fines were to be levied against all the musicians as well. The ordinance was signed into law by Mayor Thompson five days later.

It should have been evident to the council that passing any such regulation sponsored by a particular church group could later be applied to the larger community. Once the religious reformers got the bit in their teeth they could not stop. Not only were they going to save the heathen Chinese, they were going to redeem all those who had fallen to drink and popular musical entertainments. However, since Sunday was the only day most working men had off, any extension of such a regulation to other entertainment places was not welcomed by them. Within a few weeks the largely single male, white population of Portland was forcefully protesting the law. The saloon keepers, many of whom were open Saturday night through dawn on Sunday, were certainly in opposition to the ordinance and saw it as an attempt by moralists to regulate them out of business. Neither the owners nor their customers were about to contribute to political campaigns of those politicians who closed the saloons early on their most popular and profitable night of the week. For whatever the reason, the Council, in a short time rewrote it’s newly passed ordinance. On November 24, 1881 the council repealed the 12 o’clock saloon closing part of the law.<sup>22</sup>

In what seems to have been an attempt to ride on the coat tails of this repeal, the owners of the Chinese Theatre tried to affect a compromise and gain a similar exemption for themselves. *The Daily Oregonian* reports this petition to the Common Council by the new management. “From Hop Chung & Co. and others, asking that the Chinese theatre be allowed to keep open



until 2 a.m., provided the disagreeable music be dispensed with after 12 p.m.; referred to the committee on health and police."<sup>23</sup>

It was not just for reasons of entertainment that the Chinese wanted the theatre to remain open. It was a gathering point for the Chinese community, which it must be remembered was at this time around ninety five percent male. Often they were unable, because of work schedules or finances, to arrive before midnight when admission was free to all. It was a place to gossip and plan business ventures; a place where deals were struck and contracts signed. These contracts were often as important to the whole community as to the Chinese. This was pointed out to the council members by both community leaders and business men who depended on Chinese contract labor.

The City Council continued to debate the Chinese issue trying to reach some kind of accommodation. Though an amended theatre closing ordinance was proposed as early as December 7, 1881,<sup>24</sup> it was not until the new year that the city's Health and Police committee made its recommendation to the Common Council. On January 12, 1882, the Council passed the "Chinese Theatre Ordinance."<sup>25</sup> This compromise ordinance, which went into effect on January 14, 1882, prohibited the playing of a musical instrument, other than a string instrument, in any theatre or other place of public entertainment after midnight.

It should be pointed out here, to those who are unfamiliar with the Chinese theatre of the period, that the orchestra was essential to the Chinese performance. The performances of traditional Chinese theatre are closer to western operatic forms in which much of the dialogue is sung, rather than spoken. In addition to the instrumental accompaniment of the dialogue by flute and a two stringed violin, there were lavishly choreographed battle scenes pantomimed to the accompaniment of various percussion instruments. Thus, some type of musical accompaniment was necessary to underline the symbolic nature of the movement.

The council's resolution seems to have addressed the nuisance side of the issue while leaving the moral and religious alone. Thus, they avoided angering the majority of their constituents on either side of the issue. The Chinese Theatre also won; not only were they allowed to stay open after midnight, but they could still use string instruments to accompany the performers.

However, the city was fully aware that unless it enforced the compromise regulation strictly they would be faced with stronger demands by a vocal minority of its citizens. Therefore, the police stringently enforced the new law.

Unfortunately, the managers of the Chinese theater on Second Avenue were not as strict in their observance of the new ordinance. On January 20, 1882, the three Chinese Theatre operators were arrested by the Portland police for noncompliance with the new law. Ah Dock, Ah Sai and Ah Lee (the latter in all probability was Yuen Wa Lee, the theatre manager of the

Cue Hin Chou) were all arrested and released on \$10.00 bail, which they forfeited by their failure to appear in police court on January 21, 1882.<sup>26</sup> As there is no further record of arrests, the managers seem to have been careful thereafter, in their strict observance of the theatre ordinance.

In the weeks following, in preparation for their 1882 New Year's celebration, the Chinese asked the city council for a number of exemptions to city ordinances. Among them were requests to allow the explosion of fireworks and a petition from Manager Lee that, "...the Chinese Theatre be permitted to remain open until 2 o'clock a.m. during the Chinese New Year without restrictions."<sup>27</sup>

The years of 1882 and 1883 were active years in the Chinese Theatre in Portland. The company of actors seem to have been quite competent and the management produced a number of difficult plays. One such event was recorded on March 23, 1882, when the City Column in *The Oregonian* reported "Big Doin's" at the Chinese theatre. "It seems a great tragedy is to be attempted for the first time." A great deal of time, money and effort was put into preparing for this performance. The columnist for *The Oregonian* goes on to give this description of mask making for this production.

For several weeks past many of the company have been busy making masks of all kinds and descriptions. Many of them are ingeniously manufactured out of pulp which is shaped like the human heart and painted with the most horrible facial expressions. In most of them the lower jaw is made movable and worked with a spring.

Advertising was often by direct appeal to the probable audience. The company would put on the costumes and masks to be used in the evenings performance and beating drums and cymbals parade up and down Second and Third Avenues in the afternoon in hopes of literally drumming up an audience.

Another story in December of 1882, gives us a closer look at the operation of the theatre and the habits of the audience. The reporter for *The Oregonian* was surprised by the lack of an audience when the curtain arose promptly at 7:30 p.m.. "On this date only the city cop, special policeman Geer, on duty, was present even though the full company and orchestra had begun the performance." Audience or no the curtain was always prompt at the Gue Hin Chou. Upon examination of the ticket prices the reason soon became evident. Before 7:30 admission was .35 cents, after 7:30 until 9:00 it was .25 cents. That was when the rush began picking up speed as the price continued to fall: 9:00 to 10:00—20 cents, 10:00 to 11:00—15 cents, and between 11:00 and 12:00 the price dropped to just 10 cents. After midnight admission was free and that's "when every available seat is occupied."<sup>28</sup> The attendance pattern illustrates further why it was important to the Chinese for the theatre to remain open after 12:00 p.m.

For the Chinese community the theatre was more than simply a place of entertainment. It provided the Chinese with a place to gather after long days of hard labor, away from the cramped cubicles where they slept. As stated before, they were unable, especially when working outside of Portland,

to arrive before late in the night, or could not afford the early evening admission cost. In many cases, the theatre provided the only social contact they had with friends and family. It acted as a safety valve for the Chinese, giving them a place to unwind. It was a place to escape the realities of the white man's world, where the fantastic world of the theatre could carry them back to the celestial kingdom, if only for a few hours. The theatre was also a place of celebration, and even a place where both races could come together on special occasion.

The marriage in January, 1883 of Lar Fong, a wealthy Chinese merchant, to a beautiful young Chinese bride was such an occasion. The wedding party, including non Chinese notables and civic leaders like Mayor Thompson, Mr. and Mrs. C.N. Scott, Dr. Rex Ladd, W.S. Mason, Mr. and Mrs. H.J. MacDonald, attended the Chinese theatre; "where they remained rapt in admiration and the mystic sociality [sic] of a Chinese historical drama".<sup>29</sup>

In February of the same year a group of prominent ladies and gentlemen of Portland attended a special performance at the Chinese Theatre as the guests of a well known Chinese merchant named Pon.

The play produced was one calling into requisition all the most costly costumes in the wardrobe of the theatre. One feature was a Fan Drill by 14 representatives of the Chinese ladies. The performance last evening out shone anything of the kind ever seen in this city.<sup>30</sup>

In spite of these successes all was not rosy for the Chinese or for their theatre. The usual complaints about the nuisance of the Chinese theatre music continued. But it was the exclusion act of 1882 that insured there would be very few weddings to celebrate at the theatre in the future. Under the new law Chinese women were excluded from emigrating to the United States except in a few special cases.

It also made it difficult, though not impossible, for the theatre to obtain new talent from China. The Actor Ho King Chi arrived from Hong Kong but was refused permission to land by the immigration agents, because he lacked a certificate from the U. S. Consulate in Hong Kong. After a time, a hearing was scheduled on an appeal from the Chinese merchants and the theatre owners for him and a Miss Gow Chi who arrived on the same boat (there seems to have been no family connection between the two, though both bore the surname Chi). Judge Deadly ordered Ho King Chi released stating, "It is not necessary for a merchant or anyone coming here from China to have a certificate and so long as he was not a laborer he was entitled to land." As Ho King Chi was an actor, he was free to go about his business. However, Miss Gow Chi was forbidden to seek any kind of domestic employment, and she elected to return to Hong Kong.<sup>31</sup>

The mid 1880's saw an increase in the poor white immigrant population from the Eastern United States and Europe and competition for limited employment opportunities. This helped inflame anti-Chinese sentiment. The new immigrants claimed the Chinese took jobs from real Americans, even though the majority of jobs the Chinese performed were in reality, jobs the white man would take only in the direst of circumstances.

The complaints against the Chinese, represented by the Chinese Exclusion Act, arose from many sources. Perhaps the most visible reason for the racial hatred was a result of the self imposed isolation from the larger community. They came, by their own admission, not as settlers, but to make their fortune and then to return home to live out their lives in luxury in the Celestial Kingdom. The fact that the bodies of their dead were returned to China for permanent burial seemed strange and mysterious to the European cultural bias of the majority of Americans. In addition, the crowded conditions in which they lived while trying to amass their fortune made them seem, to the white community, less than human and raised fears about the spread of disease. The larger community saw Chinatown's prostitution, gambling and opium dens as a seed bed of immorality which threatened their own youths. Even the theatre found itself tarnished with the brush of crime. Often quarrels between members of the Chinese community were resolved violently and, unfortunately, on several occasions the theatre became the scene of these resolutions. One particularly notorious incident occurred on November 6, 1887, when a young Chinese man was killed by two knife wielding assailants as he was engrossed in the stage performance.<sup>32</sup> The sensationalism of the crime and the trial remained the center of Portland gossip and rumor for some time and may have contributed to giving the theatre an unsavory air.

The cultural differences were often agitated by different habitual preferences in foods, and entertainments. We see this attitude reflected in the tone of an article on Chinatown published in the October, 1886 issue of *West Shore*. The section of the article dealing with the Chinese Theatre reveals a number of cultural stereotypes and biases.

The first thing we observed was a hole in the wall about two inches high and four wide, through which a Chinaman passed a quarter and received a piece of cardboard in return. It takes a great deal of faith to put twenty-five cents into a little hole where one can neither see what becomes of it, nor anyone from whom he may reasonably expect anything in return, but the man appeared satisfied with the result.<sup>33</sup>

The correspondent goes on to describe the auditorium and backstage areas in these terms.

We found the interior to be somewhat similar to that of the ordinary small American theatre, consisting of an auditorium surrounded by a gallery, the sides of which were divided into apartments open to the front and partially to the side, the sides being innocent of any upholstering whatever. We mounted the gallery to obtain a better view and gazed down upon the audience. They were packed in rows upon long wooden benches, each with his soft black hat resting squarely on his head and his pigtail hanging straight down the middle of his back, the whole presenting the lifeless uniformity of a group of tin soldiers in a Christmas box. In several of the gallery stalls were seated a number of gaily dressed and gaudily painted ladies, evidently of the better class dividing their attention between the performance and a package of confections.<sup>34</sup>

At some time during the performance, members of the author's party were evidently invited backstage, where they observed the actors "go as you please manner of dressing and making their entrances and exits." Afterward, they descended to the area beneath the stage to tour the living quarters of the performers. They described it as cut up into three separate seven foot

high floors, of numerous apartments all crowded into one standard building story. Of the performance itself our correspondent writes,

The stage consisted of a raised platform at one end of the room, devoid of curtain, flies, scenery or stage settings of any kind, even being used for seats by a portion of the audience. At the rear were two doors, the one used for an entrance and the other for an exit. Between these was stationed the orchestra, whose perpetual muscularity found vent in agonizing solos, discordant duets and the defining din of a general engagement. ...In the paucity of accessories, the actor working his arms vigorously was rowing a boat or putting out a week's washing. ...The stage, it was occupied by a coy maiden, who was singing or reciting in an expressionless falsetto voice something which seemed to be pleasing to the audience.<sup>35</sup>

However, the tone of the article seems to indicate the author considered it to be less than pleasing and quite inferior to western theatre, as were the Chinese themselves.

It should not be surprising then, that to the community at large the strange sounds of the Chinese instruments and the different tonal scale made the music emanating from the Chinese Theatres disturbing and evoked visions of heathen rituals that frightened the ignorant and uneducated in the white community. Of course, these fears brought continued complaints to the city council about the music at the Chinese Theatre.

Many of these anti-Chinese agitators may have believed that if the Chinese theatre was closed, the Chinese might be more easily pushed out of Portland. However, the Chinese Theatre seems to have been careful not to violate the city ordinance regulating the theatre and thus avoided giving these agitators any legal excuse to close it down.

Though the newspapers of the 1880's recount many incidents of anti-Chinese protests and attempts to force the Chinese out of Portland, these hate mongers and racists with their emotional harangues were unable to convince the citizens of "The Yellow Peril." More rational heads prevailed. Most of the businessmen understood the importance of Chinese labor to the economic health of the total community. If they didn't their wives, who relied on the labor of Chinese cooks, houseboys, and laundrymen, certainly did. Even though under great pressure from politicians and the public, the Governor refused to sign an expulsion law. Chinatown and the Chinese Theatre remained integral part of the city of Portland. Though the Chinese community survived the racial excesses of the 1880's in Portland, the population began a steady decline. Yet, the theatre remained a vibrant part of the community well into the 1890's.

This was especially true during the New Year's celebration. A description of the 1891 celebration in *West Shore* of February 28th, discusses the theatre at some length.

This too, is the season when the Chinese theatre is at the height of its glory. Special preparations are made to please the public at that time, and the delighted Mongolians attend in crowds. The interior of this temple of Thespis is severely plain in all of its appointments, a few rows of benches on the main and level floor, and a narrow gallery, with a few stalls for ladies, seated with wooden benches, constitutes the auditorium. The stage is a plain rostrum extending across the end of the hall, having two doors leading directly to the dressing and property room at the rear, one used for an entrance and one for an exit. A vivid imagination is required to comprehend

a Chinese play, for there are no scenic effects to help place on *en rapport* with its spirit. When the bloody minded villain required a sword, the blue-bloused and black-cued property man walks out upon the stage and hands it to him. When the exigencies of the occasion require that both the fleeing villain and his wrathful pursuers shall cross a deep chasm in the mountains, both the mountains and the chasm being left to the unaided imagination of all concerned, the property man appears with serene dignity, places two chairs upon the bare boards of the stage, across which he lays a plank and both the chasm and the bridge now being ready, the villain and his pursuers take a new start and successfully perform the perilous feat of crossing.<sup>36</sup>

If the set and properties were meager and severe the costumes left a marvelous impression.

Nowhere else can one see such combinations of color and form in the raiment [ sic ] of human beings. The quality, too, is of the finest silk, satin, and velvet, and the cost of some of the costumes would make the immortal Sara or the statuistic Mary despair.<sup>37</sup>

If the costumes entranced the writer, the acting left him at best confused and at worst with a headache from the high pitched voices of "males masquerading in feminine costume." As to the musical accompaniment, it failed to meet a Westerner's standard of appreciation. "Scarcely an hour can one pass the portals of the theater without having his ears violently assailed by the shriek of the one string fiddle, the wail of the clarinet, the rattle of the tomtom and the brassy clang of cymbals." For the author of this article the cultural gap was too wide. The plays were too long and too complicated and the sounds too strange for the white visitors, though "...altogether," he found, "Chinese theatre, especially during the New Year's festivities, is far from an unpleasant experience."<sup>38</sup>

This article not only describes an active and functioning theatre organization, it also hints at the coming demise of the Gue Hin Chou. The theatre structure, which was described in the 1880 as "...very much like American institutions of the same kind as far as the auditorium is concerned," was no longer up to contemporary standards. Modern theatre structures of the dominant society were becoming much more comfortable and lavish in both size and accoutrements. In the early years the Chinese Theatre invited the white community to special events in its theatre. But as it became more tarnished and outdated, the Gue Hin Chou found it harder and harder to attract well heeled members of the white community to its presentations. Thus, in order to increase its revenues it tried in the 1890's to take Chinese dramatic presentations to theatres more frequently attended by the white community.

*The Oregonian* of January 9, 1893, carried this announcement on page five. "The Chinese Theatre Company will give a performance for the benefit of the many American ladies who have never had the opportunity to witness one of their entertainments. To be given Wednesday evening next at the Marquam Grand." It was not a traditional performance as done for the Chinese but, as *The Oregonian* reviewer suggested, intended to amuse and instruct the Caucasian audience. Thus, rather than a full play, scenes from a number of plays were done. The Chinese Theatre Company's manager, Chue Sue,

provided a commentator/translator between the various scenes to explain what was to happen in the following excerpts.

*The Oregonian's* writer found that the movements and actions were performed with dignity and no undue haste, and found that only, once again, the "din" of the orchestra was disturbing. Surrounded by the comforts of the Marquam Theatre, the sizeable audience, including a number of Chinese merchants, enjoyed the performance of the company. Especially enjoyable were the acrobatics and martial arts performance of the battle scene between the Tartars and the Chinese.

The Chinese army was identified by its meek and lowly demeanor, and Tartary myrmidons were conspicuous by their air of swagger and hideous appearance. When the hostilities opened the Tartars swept everything before them until an agile Chinese amazon appeared and turned the tide of war...her exploits elicited wild applause, especially from the gallery.<sup>39</sup>

Manager Chue Sue pronounced the entertainment an unqualified artistic and financial success.

The financial success was in all likelihood a very much needed shot in the arm for the company. The ability of a theatrical company to maintain itself financially profitable position at the Gue Hin Chou was becoming more doubtful with each passing year. The ageing theatre on the second floor, on Second Avenue and Alder was, like the building that housed it, old, worn out and in need of repair. But it was not just the physical structure that was outdated, the character of community itself was changing.

Chinatown was physically moving away from the theatre, north to the area across Burnside.<sup>40</sup> It was also a smaller Chinatown, losing much of its population to migration. Many of the Chinese men were leaving, moving to eastern states and cities, especially to Chicago and New York. Of those who remained in Portland, the younger Chinese families were establishing themselves in different areas of the city, often taking elder family members with them. The second and third generations, as with other immigrant groups, were becoming more or less part of the larger community. The Chinese theatre for these American born Chinese did not have the same allure as it did for their parents and grand parents.

During the 1890's the theatrical season continued to shorten. Traveling companies which made up the season in the last half of the 1890's played fewer and fewer nights in the old theatre. Many of the companies came up the coast from San Francisco, though surprisingly a number of them originated in China and played Portland's Chinese Theatre as part of an American tour. However, the stops became infrequent as the century drew to a close.

The audience for the theatre continued to diminish, and by the early 1900's, it could no longer support even a short season of performances by a highly skilled company of professional players. Performances in the Gue Hin Chou on Second Avenue became fewer and more amateur until in 1904 the second floor space was converted to a restaurant and other uses.<sup>41</sup>

## Notes

1. Jeff David Pricco, *Homeless Strangers Among Us: The Chinese Community of Portland Oregon, 1860-1900*. M.A. Thesis, Department of History, University of Oregon. 1978 p.34.
2. Ho, Nelson Chia-Chi. "Portland's Chinatown: A History of the Urban Ethnic District." Bureau of Planning, City of Portland, Or., 1978. p.7.
3. *Ibid.*
4. *The Oregonian*, February 24, 1873, p.3, col.3.
5. *Ibid.*, September 15, 1873, p.3, col.3.
6. Lester L. Schilling, Jr., *History of the Theatre in Portland, Oregon, 1846-1959*. Ph. D. Dissertation, University of Wisconsin, January, 1961. p. 187.
7. The existence of these theatres are mentioned in at least two other sources besides Schilling's Thesis. They are: Alice Henson Ernst's *Trouping in the Oregon Country*, and Nelson Chia Chi Ho's *Portland's Chinatown: A History of an Urban Ethnic District*, Bureau of Planning, City of Portland, Or., 1978. However, they contain little more than the location of these theatres.
8. Schilling, p. 187.
9. *The Oregonian*, August 10, 1880, p.3, col. 1.
10. *Ibid.*, August 19, 1880, p.2, col. 3.
11. *Ibid.*, August 20, 1880, p.3, col. 3.
12. *Ibid.*
13. *Ibid.*
14. *Ibid.*, September 17, 1880, p.3, col. 1.
15. *Ibid.*, August 25, 1880, p.3, col. 1.
16. *Ibid.*
17. *Ibid.*, September 2, 1880, p.3, col. 2.
18. *Ibid.*, February 16, 1881, p.3 col. 2.
19. *Ibid.*, March 2, 1881, p.3, col. 1.
20. *Ibid.*, September 22, 1881, p.3, col. 4.
21. "Ordinance No. 3280, an Ordinance to Compel Theatres to Close at Certain Hours." City Council minutes, Portland, Or., October 19, 1881, pp. 409-410.
22. *The Oregonian*, November 24, 1881, p. 3, col. 2.
23. *Ibid.*, November 17, 1881, p. 3, col. 2.
24. *Ibid.*, December 8, 1881, p. 3, col. 2.
25. "Ordinance No. 3354, The Chinese Theatre Ordinance." City Council Minutes, Portland, Or., January 12, 1882, p. 343. Signed into law by the mayor on January 14, 1882.
26. Police Records, City of Portland, January 20, 1882.
27. "A Petition from Yuen Wa Lee, and others," City Council Minutes, Portland, Or., February 15, 1882, p. 362.
28. *The Oregonian*, December 4, 1882, p. 4 col. 1.
29. *Ibid.*, January 25, 1883, p. 3, col. 1.
30. *Ibid.*, February 15, 1883, p. 3, col. 1.
31. *Ibid.*, January 16, 1883, p. 3, col. 1.
32. *Ibid.*, November 7, 1887, p. 2, col. 4.
33. Harry L. Wells, "A Night In Chinatown," *West Shore*, October, 1886, Vol. 17, No. 10, pp. 294-305.
34. *Ibid.*
35. *Ibid.*
36. "The Chinese New Year And Theatre," *West Shore*, February 28, 1891, Vol. 17, No. 247, pp. 139-140.
37. *Ibid.*
38. *Ibid.*
39. *The Oregonian*, January 12, 1893, p. 4, col. 6.
40. Sanborn Paris Map Co. Vol. 1, 1901, p. 67.
41. *Ibid.*

## (Re)Constructing Directing Pedagogy

CHARLES NEY

Directing is an extremely complex field. Academics and professionals alike generally agree that today's directors must deal with all areas within theatre—a formidable task in itself. Many believe they must also understand and communicate society's history and perhaps reveal its current direction with their artistic voice. As the information revolution increases our ability to access larger and larger databases, and multicultural realities continue to alter traditional perceptions, the former way of educating directors becomes more and more questionable.

The question of how to prepare future directors has generated considerable attention in recent years. The directing forum of ATHE has sponsored several panels at the last few conferences devoted exclusively to examining how we go about director preparation. Multiculturalism and feminist perspectives question fundamental assumptions and suggest alternative approaches to the whole business of directing.<sup>1</sup> Perhaps it is this new awareness that allows us to re-examine conventional perspectives concerning the education of directors.

Several studies—Bartow's *The Director's Voice*, Cole's *Directors in Rehearsal*, and Leiter's *The Great Stage Directors*—demonstrate that contemporary working directors do not possess a common biography. One also may note that these same directors do not share common theatre training experiences and certainly not educational backgrounds. Another investigation, reported in Hobgood and Mitchell's "Framework of the Director's Work in the Theatre," was conducted over some two decades and also forwards this finding.<sup>2</sup> Together these studies display the multiplicity of backgrounds from which a professional director may emerge. They also show the many diverse methods and approaches utilized by today's working directors.

If the backgrounds and working practices of directors are as different as these studies find, then the teacher of directing might well ask if the traditional model approach can encompass that diversity. Is there one way to teach directing? Yet that is precisely what most directing texts assume. They approach this subject in a prescriptive, formulaic way. These texts suggest

the teacher instill an "ideal model" approach to directing. They argue that if one follows the specific method outlined in their book, the student director will become a master of her craft.

Stuart Vaughn's recent book, *Directing Plays*, is typical. It is a compilation of his many years as a professional practitioner. It is a very explicit rendering of his way of working. It details his analytical work and shows sample pages from his prompt book and other working notes. It is full of anecdotes and maxims that he finds pertinent to his directing. It is fascinating and full of keen observations by a professional director with many years of experience under his belt.

Other directing texts in use are similar. New texts appear every couple of years. Their approach to teaching directing echoes Vaughn's. They imply: "my methods can serve as *the* model for your training."

Even Carl Weber in his excellent essay on teaching directing, "The Craft of the Eclectic," while recognizing the various intellectual and practical skills a director needs, favors a prescriptive approach that focuses on specific methods that every director must develop. He acknowledges the problem of different artistic voices and a variety of interpretations in students. Ultimately, however, he dictates the same approach for all students.

If we know that working directors use distinctly different methods and have come to their profession from many different paths, why do we teach directing as if there is one way to do it? As if we know all the answers? As if we (or our text or our teacher) are the ideal model upon which to build a student's future? How do we teach students who may not have a propensity for working in the same way as the instructor? How do we prepare them for a profession that refuses to recognize one methodology—other than offering the crassest kind of generalizations, i.e. blocking, scenework, run throughs?

### The Directing Colloquiums

While I do not pretend to be able to completely answer these questions in the limited scope of this paper, I do want to offer some guidelines and techniques. These have slowly evolved from my own experiences as a student of directing, then later as a director, and most recently as a teacher of directing. Before presenting these findings I think it important first to examine my background in directing as it greatly influences and shapes my perspective.

In my undergraduate work I had been taught directing by a professor who used Hodge's *Play Directing: Analysis, Communication and Style*. I believed that if I imitated the working methods Hodge outlined, I would be a successful director. I remember asking my teacher about a tricky analysis problem which did not lend itself to Hodge's methods. His nervous reply was that there are some exceptions in some scripts that do not work with this method. But he failed to offer any other advice. I found this diagnosis very puzzling and incomplete.

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Upon entering graduate school, I attended my first directing colloquium—the second in what would be a series of six. Hosted by the theatre department at Southern Methodist University, these were four week intensive workshops in which professional directors—such as Zelda Fichandler, Joseph Chaikin and Lloyd Richards—were invited to spend a few days talking about their work and demonstrating their methods. These directors' directors worked on scenes with an acting company of skilled students, sometimes directing the same scene as other guest artists. An audience of directors and educators attentively observed the work and asked questions.

Here I could scrutinize a professional director's actual work on a scene. Naively, I began to seek which director would demonstrate the best method or technique(s) that I could then employ in my own work. It wasn't until about half way through my first colloquium—after deciding three times in a row that "this was the best way one should direct" and then being forced to reconsider when someone new demonstrated another method with equal efficacy—that I began to realize the true lesson of these colloquiums: that one must find one's own method(s). I could adopt various techniques used by the "professionals," but I later discovered they were hollow unless they came from within.

I have spent over 20 years directing, and 10 years teaching directing—primarily without a "real" textbook as I found that most directing texts present one set of answers to directorial problems. Generally, I have judged these archetypes to be unrelated to the working practices of the total profession—particularly as I knew them in the directing colloquiums.

Instead I have drawn support for my teaching from materials derived from the directing colloquiums. Some of these have been in the form of personal notes taken during sessions. Later I received working outlines evolved from the colloquiums based on intensive study of session transcripts (many of which I prepared). These investigations have enabled me to examine directorial methodology from many different perspectives and have been extremely influential on my work as a teacher of directing.<sup>4</sup>

### Some Overall Guidelines

While I think that directing pedagogy should recognize and present multiple options to the student of directing, when I set out to teach directing I believe it important to frame these discussions with what is constant for all directors. At the outset of each semester's class we define problems encountered by all directors—regardless of personal methodology. This usually takes the form of open-ended questions which may include such areas as rehearsal methods, script analysis, phases of rehearsal, creative interpretation, and development of a production approach. I choose carefully the ones I will cover, and I integrate them into a series that makes sense for the circumstances of my class.

Thus, the "problems" are constant; the solutions become the variables. Although the answers to the questions may be many, I believe it important

to adhere to a firm structure within which the student may explore. The advantage to this process is that students learn that directing is not simply an imitation process; they have to find *their* way of doing things.

The "defined problem" approach works at all levels, for undergraduates as well as graduates. A four semester sequence will examine each area much more slowly and intensely than a one semester course.<sup>5</sup>

In order to help my students solve problems, I find I must be familiar with as many tools and options as possible. While I believe the teacher is an important resource, I do not think of myself as the primary model. Whenever possible I use professionals as models.

I always try to avoid over emphasizing my style, my methods of directing. Although that aspect of my work is intrinsic to who I am, it may mean little to my students. It is seductive and easy to believe that I am the source—the one with the answers. Yet that assumption fails to recognize the quest which is also important to learning. This is especially true for those of us who are directors. There is a different set of skills needed to lead than the ones needed to develop leaders.

In *Multiple Intelligences* Howard Gardner reviews Project Zero's work on the theory of multiple intelligences at Harvard. He defines six intelligences. He also examines the implications of such a theory for education. I believe this research accounts for much of the diversity found in professional directors' backgrounds. More importantly, it has made me aware of the need to monitor constantly my students to try and determine which intelligences they favor.

I demonstrate and discuss techniques I do not use. One never knows which students will respond to which methods. At the very least, I find them intellectually stimulating. Often they continue to inform my own directorial work. I am constantly on the prowl for new sources.<sup>6</sup>

### Specific Techniques

Within these guidelines I have found techniques that aid in helping students "find their own way." These include the development and exploration of the student's sensual and creative responses as well as their analytical and storytelling responses to text.

At some point in their development—ideally an early stage—I have students do exercises designed for developing sensory responses. To this end I find what I call "imaging work" most helpful. Generally, it consists of relaxation exercises followed by the introduction of an image of something. Using exercises borrowed from the creative writing and visual arts fields, I ask students to describe or draw image responses they have from imagery stimuli I feed to them. Using visual arts and creative writing exercises as models, I've developed a set of exercises to address other areas of theatre such as aural, tactile, emotional and action-based imagery.<sup>7</sup>

I systematically cover each individual sense before tackling dramatic text. I might start with developing visual sensitivity skills through asking my students to note their responses to art works that I introduce in class—always after relaxation exercises are done first. I do the same with aural response by bringing in musical compositions. Students are encouraged to communicate any image(s) that strikes them. They must then capture these responses in some physical form—collage, musical composition, short story, poem, performance art piece, etc.—that translates the essence of their sensory response to the class audience. After covering all the senses, finally I expose students to performance—recordings, videos or live—from which I elicit imaging responses. In this way, I work from individual art forms from which theatre borrows up to the collective set of sensory stimuli from which a theatre piece is made.

When I do this work I have found that I must not censor or criticize student responses as this is a highly vulnerable phase of the work. I have discovered the importance of nurturing “strokes” to the development of their creative instincts. Many students are afraid at first to be creative or to trust their creativity. Our society often ridicules such efforts—particularly in the initial stages of expression. But offering positive feedback almost always encourages them to open up.<sup>8</sup>

Finally, I introduce theatre texts and continue a similar process. I ask students to capture and note their responses to dramatic text through drawings, collages, poetry, music, etc. that seems to summarize the essence of their sensory and feeling responses. Again, these are presented to the class, the members of which are asked to describe their own sensory responses to the presentation.

I have discovered that student journals can be extremely helpful to this process as well—but not the strictly written kind. Borrowing a concept from a psychologist who specializes in working with would-be artists with serious blocks,<sup>9</sup> I have introduced the “magic book” to my directing class. This journal has three parts: 1) a record of written thoughts, 2) visual images such as drawings, pictures or parts of pictures cut from magazines, etc., and 3) a record of dreams. During the developmental phase—when the director is formulating an interpretation and approach—it becomes a source of inspiration. In later phases (analysis, work with the production team, rehearsals) it becomes a primary guide—a creative reservoir to which to return whenever needed. I should add that I do not grade or even look at these journals unless students are willing to share them with me.

Another technique, borrowed from Carl Weber, is to develop analytical and storytelling abilities with text. The goal is to define the dramatic actions. I have begun to use storytelling exercises which utilize both inductive and deductive skills. First I ask my student: “What are you trying to say with your piece? What is the story you are telling.” Without looking at the script in detail they must write down the story. Then it is either expanded to include all important details or reduced to the essentials—depending on the student’s needs.

Next, I introduce the concept of methodical script analysis borrowing heavily from the approaches to textual analysis found in *The Craft of the Theatre Director*. Based on the colloquium transcripts, Hobgood and Mitchell define four distinct methods of analysis used by working directors: 1) accumulation of perceptions, 2) Stanislavsky based script analysis, 3) American method based analysis, and 4) prosody approaches—especially as reflected in RSC’s approaches to Shakespearean verse. Not all directors use all methods, but I cover all possibilities making students try each. Finally, they are asked to do an inductive analysis and develop a second version of the “story.” The two versions are then reconciled, and a final version is prepared from the two methods of storytelling.

This approach to script analysis was first introduced as part of last year’s directing class. Combined with the imaging work, it led to what I felt was my most successful semester ever. The projects at the end were very strong.

Students are not allowed to be passive in class. Responses from the other members of the class are seminal to the developing director. Class feedback involves and enlightens. Much of the learning comes from observation and discussion. What are they thinking about what they just saw? What are they feeling? I encourage them to respond as audience members.<sup>10</sup> The class responses provide the student director with a sense of what communicates and what doesn’t. Discussions usually clarify what was communicated to the “audience.” This often reveals to the director what he believed was clearly stated in his work, but did not “read.”

I observe closely and evaluate carefully the developing directors I am teaching. Their style, their solutions may not (perhaps should not) be mine. Their growth as directors will not necessarily parallel mine. I try to look beyond personal style, not change it. It is deeply rooted in their personality. Besides, it tells you little about their use of directorial tools.

I keep a journal and detailed notes on each student which I review periodically to see if I detect patterns. I try to avoid second guessing and quickly labeling. The artistic voice(s) within them must be nurtured and developed. I try to find the underlying focus and/or through-line in their work. What are they trying to say? What is their unique voice? How is their work developing? What are their strengths? Weaknesses? What options do I have to communicate these assessments to my students? Which do I project will be most effective in affecting change?

Flexibility is important. What worked with the last class may not work with the current one. Every class is a new journey which may lead students to new answers. Teaching directing is a *process* of self-discovery—for the teacher as well as the student. I constantly analyze and assess the work of students and my class.

Recent discussions of leadership also affect my work as a teacher of directing. In a world of constant change, multiple cultures, and incredible diversity, principles can guide choices. Thus, I discuss creative leadership and encourage students to develop their own principles. What are their central beliefs about theatre and the role of theatre in our culture? What principles

do they subscribe to in their everyday working ethic with collaborators? I find Covey's *Principle Centered Leadership* provides a foundation for directors to make decisions based on an individual's personal principles.

Successful management of the production process requires the director to be an effective and creative leader in spite of stress and pressure. The students' personal beliefs will help them answer the ever nagging question "What should I do?" in a given situation. As tempting as it may be for me, I believe it impossible ever to answer fully this inquiry from students. I risk my answers becoming prescriptive advice, revealing more about my style than helping them define theirs.

Studies on creativity have also opened up another world of possibility. I do not believe directing is mere craft and I do not teach it that way—not even for beginners. I address the seemingly illusive questions early in the class process. In essence I want my students to ask themselves: "How can I tap into my creativity? How can I develop it?"

\* \* \* \* \*

The model approach has long been used by the field in the areas of acting and design. It has been the primary way of imparting knowledge to the next generation for most of theatre's history—including that history in the academic theatre. Yet, directing's relative "newness" to the field, it's unique position within it, and a review of its practitioners' backgrounds might suggest a less traditional approach.

My experience suggests that the professional director has many options. The individual style of a director reflects her unique personality, and the choice of methods to which she will tend to gravitate. Directors do not all work alike. Therefore, directing pedagogy might be better served by using a problem and multiple option format.

My students have taught me much through the years. My approach is still evolving and continues to unfold with each new class. Ironically, I feel a lot more secure with a "problems and options" approach than when I offer "how to" advice. The students have to take ownership; they have to accept responsibility for their decisions. They have to find their own answers. Hopefully, their education and training will lead them to a lifetime of self-discovery.

#### Notes

1. See for instance Susan Letzler Cole's *Directors in Rehearsal* where she argues for a distinctly unique analog—"the director as beholder, ironic recuperator of the maternal gaze." (5)

2. Burnet M. Hobgood and Thomas Mitchell's *The Framework of the Director's Work in the Theatre* is the fourth report "investigating the practices, processes, and rationales of directors in the professional theatre of the U.S. and Europe." They also present this same finding in their forthcoming book, *The Craft of the Theatre Director*.

3. Again see Cole's *Directors in Rehearsal*. She examines the rehearsal methods of 10 directors. Hobgood and Mitchell in their *Framework* study have examined the rehearsal methods of over 40 directors, and in their forthcoming *The Craft of the Theatre Director* detail contrasting rehearsal methods.

4. The various drafts of *The Framework of the Director's Work in Theatre* were shared with me because of my staff role with several of the colloquiums. Most recently I have been a reader and respondent for chapters from the unpublished book, *The Craft of the Theatre Director*.

5. I have taught this approach in both situations.

6. I use Covey's *Principle Centered Leadership* as well as his *The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People*. Both books are really intended for CEO's and other business managers. I also use Sandra Sherman's *Source Imagery* (intended for writers and visual artists as well as Alice Miller's early works, *The Drama of the Gifted Child* and *The Untouched Key*, which examines the effects of child abuse on personal creativity.

7. It seems to me that art and writing are somewhat ahead of us in theatre in evolving specific exercises for developing creativity. I believe my own work is still primitive in this area. See for example Jon Whitmore's *Directing Postmodern Theatre* which discusses 20 possible ways of communicating in a production. I only deal with the basic senses.

8. Both Sandra Shuman and Alice Miller (*The Drama of the Gifted Child*, *The Untouched Key*) document the ill effects of criticism and ridicule on the creative process. Shuman also demonstrate the healing effects of nurturing and stroking on removing creative blocks.

9. See Shuman's *Source Imagery*.

10. I find Weber's approach to be a fertile way of developing this skill in directors.

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## The French Academy, Corneille, and *Le Cid*: A Study in Controversy

J. MARISA SAMUELS

During the seventeenth century the genre of dramatic literature in France changed and evolved in ways that were to greatly influence playwrights of successive generations. Many important figures of the period attempted to write for the stage, including the powerful Cardinal Richelieu himself. The dramatist to generate the most controversial and important work of the period was undoubtedly Pierre Corneille, whose *Le Cid* created an uproar amongst the members of the literary world. To comprehend fully the scandal which arose around the production and publication of this *oeuvre*, a basic understanding of French society and ideology must be grasped.

In France, the seventeenth century was called "le grand siècle" (Cheng 181) or the Great Century. It was the time of the absolute monarchy, the time of a King supposedly endowed with certain powers and privileges directly given him from God. This style of government, as well as the religious wars in which France was involved, affected the development of French drama during the middle part of the century (Lancaster II: 5). Those in power, especially Cardinal Richelieu, encouraged pursuits into the field of literature; many nobles enjoyed the work of playwrights and had plays dedicated to them (Lancaster II: 8). Playwrights and other authors of the time often looked to the classics for inspiration, and therefore the legends of Greece and Rome became common themes in much of the literature produced. This classical influence led to the development of certain rules for drama, first established in 1634 (Lancaster II: 10). Yet French dramatists still tended to pay more attention to the likes and dislikes of their audiences than to these restrictions or their critics. Although many authors looked to the ancients for subject matter, they did not completely adhere to the classic ideals of well-made plays—for example, Aristotle's definition of tragedy was not too important to these writers (Lancaster II: 14). How, then, were these dramatic rules established?

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That Richelieu dictated the rules when he created the French Academy is a common fallacy. In power from 1624-1642, Richelieu wanted to unify France and create a strong country with an absolute monarchy as its center (Cheng 132). Yet Richelieu and the rest of the court did approve of drama and performances in general (Lancaster II: 5); the Cardinal encouraged playwrights and helped France to prosper so that French literature in general could improve (Lancaster II: 7). Because of the general tendency in France toward order (Lancaster I: 373), *L'Academie Francaise* was eventually created by Richelieu for "harmonizing and directing literary and philological activities" (Lancaster I: 374).

According to different sources, the Academy was founded either in 1634 (Amon 8), 1635 (Tapie 273), or 1637 (Masson 254). Nonetheless, all historians do agree that during the first half of the seventeenth century efforts were made by various small societies of learned men to perfect the French language (Maland 5). The group that eventually comprised the founding members of the Academy began meeting at the home of Valentin Conrart (Masson 251) in 1629, and included Mssrs. Godeau, de Gombault, Conrart, Giry, Habert, l'abbé de Cerisy, de Serisay, and de Malleville (Bonnefon 117). From 1629-1633, these men of letters held weekly meetings to discuss a myriad of subjects (Masson 252), possibly including the reading of a work completed by one of the group, followed by criticism and a promenade (Bonnefon 117). Always completely honest and frank in their discussion, these first years were the best for the small society (Bonnefon 118). At the beginning, these meetings were kept secret, but soon word spread and other writers and men of letters asked to join the group in order to read and criticize works produced by the members (Sainte-Beuve 6). Eventually, Boisrobert—a friend and confidant of Cardinal Richelieu—heard of these meetings and informed the Cardinal of the group's existence, so impressed was he with the intellectual level of the members' activities (Masson 253). Richelieu perceived that these meetings could become dangerous if the member turned towards political discussion, but he also realized that he could use this small society to his advantage (Masson 254), and he therefore decided to make it a formal association "...for use as the literary decoration of the reign" (Sainte-Beuve 6). When the group received Richelieu's invitation to come under the auspices of the government, some members were at first reluctant to do so, but they could not easily refuse this request from the Cardinal (Masson 254). It was both an honour and an annoyance to gain support from Richelieu, for becoming a government association meant that the group would have restrictions imposed on them by an outside source, which was an undesirable restraint (Bonnefon 119). These events took place in 1634, the same year that M. Conrart was married, and therefore the group began to convene at the home of M. des Marets to establish formally the Academy (Bonnefon 121). At this time, rules for the society were drawn up, and officers were installed (Masson 252).

Creating the Academy "...represented a step towards the triumph of a literature governed by rule, which respected the authority of the ancient

writers" (Tapie 273). Richelieu wanted the Academy to be a judge of all written works (Sainte-Beuve 13), and the Letter Patent of 1635 explained the goals of the Academy: to perfect the French language, create rules, set the standard usage of words, and regulate terms (Sainte-Beuve 12). The primary function, therefore, was to establish and maintain the use of French language (Maland 100), not necessarily to pass judgement on all literature of the time. One of the advantages of the Academy is that it did afford recognition and prestige to the era's important men of letters, although it represented "literary authority" more than "literary excellence" (Maland 102). Because the members often thought of the Academy as a sort of official salon, some of the principles of use they advocated became too strict (Maland 102), leading to some dissension amongst literary non-members. The Academy did slowly produce a *Dictionnaire* which included only words that were commonly used in polite society (Maland 100-1), but the most important thing the Academy did during the century of its foundation was to judge *Le Cid*.

When the quarrel of *Le Cid* was extended to the realm of the Academy by Scudery, the association judged the play by examining its adherence to various rules, including the three unities of time, place, and action. These unities came from classic Greek plays and the writing of Aristotle in his "Poetics," but they were first put into practice in France at the home of the Duke de Montmorency by Jean Mairet around the year 1629 (Lancaster I: 374). To Mairet, the unity of time was the most important rule (Lancaster I: 375). Ironically, it was Corneille who first introduced this unity into the genre of tragedy at a later date (Lancaster I: 378), and it was Scudery—the man who most vehemently attacked Corneille's negligent use of the unities—who was the chief opponent to this regularity preached by Mairet (Lancaster I: 382). When Mairet undertook to put the classic Greek ideal into use, he did not write like a pedant attempting to illustrate his knowledge of Aristotle's rule, but rather as an ambitious playwright desiring to win acclaim and please his patron (Lancaster I: 377); in March of 1631 Mairet published *Silvanire* with a preface detailing the unities he had imposed on his play (Lancaster I: 379). Tragedy was the most important genre for these rules, and it is important to remember that these rules were "...never imposed from above by scholars or political or social leaders" (Lancaster I: 382), but that they were suggested first by dramatists themselves, who attempted to use them and found that they were quite successful (Lancaster I: 382). Other rules developed later and upon which the Academy relied more heavily were those of  *vraisemblance* or resemblance to probable events in life, and *bienséance* or the omission of disturbing or violent events shown onstage (Amons 184). In fact, then, the Academy was required to judge written works on four different sets of rules: (1) rules of tone, (2) rules of the unities, (3) rules of decorum, and (4) rules of verisimilitude and good taste (Cheng 145). The Academy considered each of these realms of regulations when it passed sentence on Corneille's famous play. Some background information on the playwright himself may be helpful before beginning a discussion of the play and the ensuing quarrel.

Born in Rouen June sixth, 1606 of a middle-class Norman family (Brereton 126), Pierre Corneille was never a tactful man, but always remained somewhat "awkward and provincial" (Sainte-Beuve 47); his character was fortunately not reflected in his work (Brereton 126). Corneille was educated by the Jesuits, and gained from them an interest in the Stoics, Seneca, Lucan, and drama in general (Maland 108). After his schooling, the young Corneille became a lawyer at the age of eighteen (Brereton 126). According to one source, he wrote his first verses for Catherine Hue in 1625 (Amon 4), although another source contends that this first love affair did not happen until 1627 (Sainte-Beuve 37). It is certain, however, that Corneille's first dramatic attempts were comedies, and that in the Summer of 1629, Montdory and his troupe of actors passed through Rouen and the leader himself read and liked a play written by Corneille (Cheng 128). Corneille then transferred to Paris, where he learned the rules of theatre over the next seven years (Sainte-Beuve 40) and became one of the "Cinq Auteurs" who wrote for Richelieu (Maland 109). *Le Cid* was first produced in early 1637 as a "romantic tragi-comedy" (Brereton 133). The Spanish subject had been suggested to Corneille by M. de Chalons, and the playwright found that Spanish poetry appealed to him, so he adapted it to fit the tastes of the French audiences (Sainte-Beuve 41-2). After the uproar over his masterpiece, Corneille retired from the stage for three years, but then returned and produced a group of tragedies that perfectly conformed to the rules advocated by the Academy. When he died in 1684, Corneille left behind a legacy that included thirty-three plays written in just forty-four years (Amon 7).

Exactly what inspired Corneille to write *Le Cid* is unknown (Lancaster I: 121), although he did have some former knowledge of Spanish novels and had already adapted other foreign plays to the French stage (Lancaster I: 120). The source for *Le Cid* was Guillen de Castro's *Mocedades del Cid*, which gave Corneille the characters and plot essentials (Brereton 135), although Corneille did change the emphasis of the plot to the love affair between Chimene and Rodrigue. Corneille's original draft of the play did not meet the formal requirements of a tragedy, but instead was a play with a created tragic element between the lovers (Lancaster I: 123). The main themes of passion and revenge were easily realized in this tale of the battle between love and the familial code of honour. No matter what the critics may have said or written, the play itself was a huge success with the public, and can be called the "earliest classical monument of its century and the first modern French play to win recognition as a genuine contribution to French literature" (Lancaster II: 118).

How and why this play caused such controversy was one of the most popular topics of the seventeenth century, although the interest in this subject has waned through successive ages. The "quarrel" of *Le Cid*, as it was commonly termed at the time, was the most important literary crisis of the seventeenth century. As stated before, the play was a grand success, and the public acclaimed the play. Corneille's heroes were very popular with French audiences of the time, for the spectators admired their "romantic élan, ardor,

and ability to move and ignite the emotions" (Cheng 134). This very same success was also partly the cause of the controversy, for it engendered much jealousy amongst other writers of the day. Also, Corneille published his play rather quickly after its first production, which was not common at the time, and therefore allowed his critics to scrutinize the play in minute detail (Lancaster II: 130).

Corneille's most zealous opponent was fellow dramatist Scudery, who published a detailed analysis of the piece based partly on the writings of Aristotle. Scudery found that the play did not conform to the ideals of  *vraisemblance* and that it was not "ethically correct" (Lancaster II: 132). Scudery also criticized the use of the unities, for although the play does technically occur within a twenty-four hour time period, the myriad of events which take place during that time is improbable. In conclusion, Scudery declared that "the subject is worthless, that the play violates dramatic rules, is poorly constructed, has many bad verses, and owes almost all its beauty to the Spanish dramatist" (Lancaster II: 132-3). Corneille did not directly refute Scudery's allegations, but instead pointed out the play's popularity and defended himself in the following manner:

I like following the rules; but far from becoming their slave, I enlarge and narrow them according to the needs of my subject, and I even completely break with those which concern the period of time in which the action occurs when their severity seems to me incompatible with the beauties of the events I'm describing. To know the rules, and to learn the secret of adeptly applying them to our theatre—these are two completely different things and maybe, to make a play succeed, it is not enough to have studied the writings of Aristotle and Horace...our prime goal must be to please the court and the public, and to attract a huge crowd to our performances. If possible, adherence to the rules should be added to this formula, so that the critics are not offended, in order to win universal acclaim but let us especially win the public favour; otherwise, our play may be proper and regular, but if it is hissed and booed at the theatre, the critics will not dare to declare themselves on our side, and would prefer to state that we have misunderstood the rules, rather than giving us praise when we are scorned by the general consensus of those who see plays solely as a source of amusement (Lancaster II: 11).

Many other attacks were launched against Corneille, including anonymous pamphlets which discussed every aspect of the play. But Corneille had his supporters as well, and some of the authorless pamphlets defended the writer, declaring that poetry should not be controlled by the critics, that the play contained suspense and other redeeming qualities, and that Scudery's accusations were wrong (Lancaster II: 133). After all, the play could appeal both to Romanicists and Classicists, as well as the ordinary French audience who enjoyed the tragi-comedic elements of the production (Lancaster II: 128-9). Almost all of the criticism directed against the play revolved around the question of ethics more than around the form of the written work itself; critics attacked the moral aspects of the story (Lancaster II: 138). Above all, the controversy created was a literary and critical quarrel—not a political one (Brereton 139)—even when Scudery appealed to the French Academy in May of 1637 for a judgement of the play (Lancaster II: 135).

Much disagreement surrounded the role that Richelieu played in the judging of *Le Cid*. Some thought that the Cardinal was opposed to the work and jealous of Corneille's success, yet this is highly unlikely given the fact

that two performances of the play were held in his palace and that the Cardinal himself approved of Corneille and admitted his family into the nobility owing to the merits of the playwright's work (Lancaster 135). Though some still contend that Richelieu was bitter because of Corneille's new-found fame and that he disliked the play and the language therein (Maland 110), there is really no evidence strong enough to prove that Richelieu wished the play to be condemned (Lancaster II: 137). He may have disapproved of the duels in the play or feared the effect such scenes might have on the public, but most likely he simply did not agree with Corneille's lack of rules (Auchincloss 181); the Cardinal just wanted to restore order, stifle the controversy, and establish the authority of his newly created French Academy (Cheng 186).

From June thirteenth to the sixteenth the Academy considered the play (Lancaster II: 138), although their decision did not appear until December (Lancaster II: 139), for three revisions were required before Richelieu approved *Les Sentiments de l'Academie Francaise sur la tragicomedie du Cid* (Brereton 137). The Academy examined both Scudery's objections and allegations as well as parts of the play itself, including some faults of the work which Scudery did not point out. Although the association approved of many elements of the play, they found more things of which to disapprove: the play did not properly follow the restrictions of  *vraisemblance* (Lancaster II: 139); the Infanta was useless and unnecessary; it was "unfortunate" to represent so many places; too much happened for one twenty-four hour period; and, the characters did not act appropriately (Lancaster II: 140). The Academy especially found fault with the character of Chimene; declaring that her marriage to the murderer of her father was "inexcusable" (Lancaster II: 139): "In this it must be admitted that her morals are scandalous if not, in effect, completely depraved" (Bailey 13). Chimene's fault of passion—that is, her pursuing her lover while simultaneously trying to fulfill her duty to her father—would have been much more acceptable for a male character (Bailey 14). And if Chimene must possess these disgraceful morals, then she must be punished for them at the end (Bailey 13). Although the real question under debate was the ethics of the play—for even Corneille agreed with the objections that twenty four hours for all of the action was unlikely (Lancaster II: 140)—the judgement by the Academy established the unities as strict rules (Bailey 4). Yet even *L'Academie Francaise* could not deny that the play was successful or influential, stating:

Finally, we conclude that although the subject matter of *Le Cid* is not good, that it is at fault in the denouement, that it is burdened with irrelevant episodes, that propriety and theatrical good taste are lacking in several places and that there are many poor verses and much impure speech; nevertheless, the candour and violence of its emotions, the powerful effect and the delicacy of several of its sentences, and that inexplicable pleasure to be found mingled with its errors, have won for it a place of high repute among other similar works of French literature which have given the greatest satisfaction (Maland 111).

One of the main problems with the decision passed by the Academy was that the issue of the play's genre was not given much discussion. The play was attacked under the rules commonly applied to tragedies, although the playwright himself termed his 1637 edition a tragi-comedy (Amon 186).

Corneille had attempted to combine these two genres, and eventually called the play a tragedy after he had reworked it and published it again in 1648 (Amon 187). This question has remained largely unresolved, but the ambiguity of the definitions of tragi-comedy and tragedy must be considered when judging the play on the basis of the rules established by French playwrights and the Academy during this time period.

No matter what the critics and the French Academy declared, *Le Cid* remained a favorite of the French public. The play was acted eleven times by Moliere's troupe later in the century, and during the years 1680-1900 *Le Cid* was the most frequently performed of Corneille's plays at La Comedie Francaise (Lancaster II: 144). The phrase "Cela est beau comme *Le Cid*" ("That is beautiful, like *The Cid*") became a common expression of the time for complimenting something which deserved praise (Cheng 129). Indeed, as Balzac told the critics, "Therefore, you have succeeded at court, and he has won at the theatre" (Bailly 12). Despite all of the scandal surrounding the literary work, *Le Cid* and Corneille emerged victorious, for the play remains the most influential work produced during the mid-seventeenth century, and the quarrel which it inspired was the "most important literary controversy" of the time (Cheng 129). And contrary to common misconception, the affair of *Le Cid* did not completely destroy its creator.

The quarrel did force Corneille to re-evaluate his own work (Sainte-Beuve 44), and he took a three year hiatus from the theatre after the Academy published its decision, but "The Romantic idea that Corneille had his wings clipped by followers of Aristotle becomes absurd when we learn that he was one of the first to introduce the unities" (Lancaster I: 754-5). Corneille abandoned Spanish themes in his subsequent plays and returned to ancient Rome for inspiration, producing unmistakable tragedies after his short vacation from playwrighting. Between 1640 and 1642 he produced *Horace*, *Cinna*, and *Polyeucte*, all of which strictly followed the rules of tragedy and helped to further engrain these constraints (Lancaster II: 12); these plays all observed the three unities and ended victoriously, as true tragedies of the period were required to do (Brereton 145). Public opinion towards Corneille remained strongly in his favour, and even the government still supported him, for he was nominated to the French Academy in 1647 (Sainte-Beuve 46). Yet other playwrights began to surpass him and usurp his place in the literary world, especially Racine—that new master of tragedy, and Corneille finally left the theatre in 1653 (Sainte-Beuve 46). In 1660 he published his *Discours* which presented a discussion and justification of his theatre; in this work, Corneille presented his own ideas of tragedy and his opinion of what makes a theatrical success of a play (Maland 112). Clearly, even when the author was not directly involved in producing plays for performance, he was still an influential figure in the French literary world of the mid-seventeenth century.

The most important lasting effect of the controversy of *Le Cid* was the change in dramatic structure evident in the plays of French authors from the latter half of the seventeenth century, including even Corneille's later works. Playwrights relied more heavily on classic influences and ideals for

inspiration, and did not create wholly original works. The neo-classic plays produced by these writers remain classics in their own ways, for the works contain a timeless quality inherent only in the best tragedies and comedies. Yet one cannot help but to wonder what sort of works would have emerged from dramatic geniuses such as Racine and Moliere had the quarrel of *Le Cid* not resulted in as heavy an emphasis on strict forms and restraining rules. Perhaps the legacy left to successive playwrights would not be so formidable and admirable. Then again, perhaps it would be more so, in a different manner. All whimsical suppositions aside, the fact remains that the creation of *L'Academie Francaise* and the affair of *Le Cid* strongly affected playwrights of the late seventeenth century, and firmly established Corneille as an influential member of the dramatic world, both for his own time and for subsequent generations.

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## "Heaven Will Protect the Working Girl": The Multifaceted Career of Marie Dressler

Laurilyn Harris

In 1886, fourteen-year-old Leila Koerber decided to fulfill her childhood ambition by leaving home to join the circus. Fortunately for the future of both stage and film, she was sidetracked by a newspaper advertisement recruiting actors for a second-rate dramatic stock company managed by the brother of singer Emma Nevada. She answered the ad, concealed her age, and found herself the leading lady of an ill-assorted group of touring performers, making up in enthusiasm what she lacked in experience. In order to spare her parents the shame of having a daughter employed in such a dubious profession, she changed her name to that of a German aunt whom she had never met: Marie Dressler.

A plump, ungainly child, Marie had quickly discovered that she could attract attention by exaggerating her clumsiness:

It was tripping over a rug as a fat, clumsy, three year-old that settled my career. I discovered that people laughed when I acted awkwardly, so I began to fall deliberately.<sup>1</sup>

She found solace in the laughter, and, having determined that "fate cast me to play the role of an ugly duckling with no promise of swanning,"<sup>2</sup> she decided to become a comedienne, to play "my life as comedy rather than the tragedy many would have made of it."<sup>3</sup> It proved a wise choice. By the time she died, she had become Hollywood's best-loved star, renowned for her portrayals of strong, self-sufficient, humorous old women.

Dressler had left home with only "a propensity for clowning"<sup>4</sup> and a fierce determination to provide a more comfortable life for her mother. Since her father, an impoverished musician of uncertain temperament, had a habit of alienating his pupils, Marie's family had lived in chronic poverty, moving from town to town in Canada and the United States. Her initial departure from the family fold was motivated by a desire to give her mother some measure of financial security, "to lay every beautiful thing she was denied at her feet."<sup>5</sup> Dressler lacked any formal education, but, as she later observed,

"I have never had any lessons in anything; but perhaps this is as well, since I have had nothing to unlearn."<sup>6</sup>

There was plenty to learn in the precarious world of touring theatre. Nevada's company ranged from "has-beens to would-bes,"<sup>7</sup> but, from her first professional appearance as Cigarette in a dramatization of *Under Two Flags* in 1886 until the company was stranded in Michigan some months later, Marie gained experience that was to prove extremely valuable in her subsequent career. Since the company was small, she learned versatility and flexibility as she doubled and tripled roles. She mastered vocal projection, timing, and stage blocking. She became adept at handling unruly hecklers, manipulative managers, megalomaniac directors, and hostile landladies. Above all, she discovered that she could make audiences laugh, and provide them with "a moment of blissful oblivion"<sup>8</sup> from the dreary realities of their lives.

Armed with her hard-won knowledge and newly-acquired technical skills, she soon found other employment, the most important of which was a three-year engagement with the George Baker troupe, better known as the Bennett-Moulton Opera Company. The company's schedule was hectic—a new opera was presented every week—and Dressler gradually increased her repertory to thirty-eight principal roles. She had an excellent singing voice, red hair, and the buxom, Lillian Russellesque figure then in vogue.<sup>9</sup> However, always a realist, she weighed her assets carefully and decided that she was "too homely for a prima donna and too big for a soubrette."<sup>10</sup> Therefore, she concentrated on character parts such as Katisha in *The Mikado*, finding them more interesting and congenial than romantic leads:

This was my first opportunity really "to get" an audience and I realized then that it was portraying a type more human than a Grande Duchesse or a Queen that gets one over the footlights.<sup>11</sup>

Dressler had no illusions about her looks. Her desire to join the circus had stemmed from a longing "to wear gauzy costumes and hear the crowd cheer."<sup>12</sup> She soon realized that her face and figure were ill-suited to gauze, but chose to capitalize on the very features that less courageous actresses might have tried to conceal. As she candidly observed, "my instinct has always been to turn drawbacks into drawing cards."<sup>13</sup> Her bulky figure lent itself to physical comedy and she augmented her remarkable sense of balance with split-second timing and extraordinary agility. (Eventually, she became so well known for her pratfalls that dramatists would seek her out, saying "I've got a wonderful part for you, Miss Dressler. You fall down in every act."<sup>14</sup>) As for her less than classical countenance, she once stated "I never let a beauty parlor cramp my style."<sup>15</sup> The combination of her marvelous facial mobility and her homely features convulsed audiences, and she always declared that "I would rather be laughed at than pitied."<sup>16</sup> She never minded self-parody: in the *Hollywood Revue of 1929*, she appeared as Venus rising from the sea.

The Bennett-Moulton Opera Company, with its grueling pace and frantic schedule, provided Dressler with the show business equivalent of a university education and she profited by every minute of it:

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It was essential to learn the stage trade before stardom was possible. The road stock company with small parts to creep in before we ran in big roles—that was our college.<sup>17</sup>

By the time she left Bennett-Moulton, she had played a wide variety of roles ranging from royalty to elderly women.<sup>18</sup> She had developed a formidable talent for both memorization and improvisation. She had perfected her comic technique, learned to adjust her material to the size and composition of the audience, and, by the age of twenty, was a seasoned stage veteran with a following.

She made her New York debut on May 28, 1892 as Cunigonde in *The Robber of the Rhine*, a romantic comedy with music by Maurice Barrymore. The play failed after five weeks, however, and Dressler, by this time supporting her whole family (her mother, father, sister, brother-in-law, and two elderly aunts), sang songs nightly at the Atlantic Garden on the Bowery at \$10.00 a night and at Koster and Bial's Music Hall (\$15.00 a night) while desperately seeking another acting job.

She found several, but none was successful until she was chosen to support Lillian Russell in both *The Princess Nicotine* (1893) and *Girofle-Girofla* (1894).<sup>19</sup> She was now considered a desirable box office commodity and was hired for other New York engagements. She scored her first big personal success when she created the role of music hall singer Flo Honeydew in *The Lady Slavey* (1896). In the words of contemporary author Lewis C. Strang, she played the part "with the agility of a circus performer and the physical elasticity of a professional contortionist."<sup>20</sup> Her song, "Hoop de Doodle Do," never failed to bring down the house, and her cyclonic dance routine with Dan Daly<sup>21</sup> was received with raptures by both the critics and the audience. The show was a hit and played for four years, both New York City and on tour.

At the end of her first season in *Lady Slavey*, Dressler found herself financially solvent for the first time, and resolved to take a much-needed vacation at a fashionable resort. Her experiences there vividly illustrate the ambivalent status of the actress in America at the turn of the century. Marie Dressler might be a popular attraction as Flo Honeydew, but offstage at the Marion House on Lake George she was treated as a pariah. The line was drawn at the footlights, and Dressler had the temerity to cross it. She was ostracized and humiliated—residents even removed their pets from her vicinity, lest they be contaminated by her presence. Hurt and embarrassed, she spent her time playing and singing in the deserted dance hall at the hotel, until an elderly woman looked in the window, admired her singing, and politely asked her to play "Believe Me, If All Those Endearing Young Charms." Slightly cheered by an audience, Dressler obliged. The stranger then invited her home to meet her daughter. Dressler hesitantly revealed her connection with the wicked world of show business, but her new acquaintance, far from fleeing in horror, merely repeated the invitation. After a pleasant afternoon, Dressler reluctantly returned to the hotel for her usual solitary dinner. However:

Imagine my surprise on entering the dining-room to find people rising all about me! "Won't you sit here?" said one, and, "You'll find a better view over here," said another, and, "We've been saving a place for you here," insisted a third.<sup>22</sup>

The elderly woman was the widow of President Grant, and suddenly, as if by magic, Marie Dressler was socially acceptable.

In a sense, Dressler's ill-starred vacation—at least the latter part of it—was to prove prophetic. In a relatively short time her friends were to include heiresses, corporation executives, ambassadors, classical musicians, and presidents. She was one of the first actresses to cross the invisible barrier, one of the few "with both a great reputation [in show business] and social standing."<sup>23</sup> In an age where professional entertainers were not invited to society dinners, Dressler could be found sliding down the banister at the mansion of socialite Mrs. Orce Wilson. At Proctor's t Street Theatre she once hit the aristocratic Mrs. Stuyvesant Fish with a leek thrown during a burlesque routine. Far from taking offense, Mrs. Fish asked her to entertain at her parties (both as a performer and as a guest) and showered her with expensive gifts. She was invited to visit Mrs. Woodrow Wilson at the Summer White House in 1913, and the President's family in turn accepted an invitation to the Dressler villa.<sup>24</sup> During World War I, she was one of the few persons who could come and go at the White House without a security pass, and she was there so frequently that she "knew perfectly well where to find the ice box."<sup>25</sup>

When illness finally forced her to leave the cast of *Lady Slavey* after four years, she found that her obligations to her family had left her without funds once more. It was to be the pattern of her life: she made and lost several fortunes during her career, not because of personal extravagance, but because of her generosity to others, particularly her relatives. She never seemed to mind. "What is a fortune," she said, "except an opportunity to dispense it."<sup>26</sup> Fortunately, she was now a star, and managers sought her out rather than the reverse. She was soon working again in shows such as *The Man in the Moon* (1899), *Miss Prinnt* (1900), and *The King's Carnival* (1901). She played in musicals, burlesques, and comedies, and then decided to try her luck in vaudeville—one of the first major stars to do so. She had never been afraid to venture into unknown territory, and, when warned by her friends that if she went on the vaudeville circuit she would never be able to play Broadway again, she replied "the stage doors of the legitimate and vaudeville houses look alike and the audiences don't look much different."<sup>27</sup> In 1905, she joined comedian Joe Weber at Weber's Music Hall, and was featured in reviews such as *Higgledy-Piggledy* and *Tunddle-Twaddle*. She sang, danced, played "amusingly wretched piano,"<sup>28</sup> and lampooned the classics in burlesques such as *Tess of the Vaudevilles* (a satire on Hardy's *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*) and a demented version of *Romeo and Juliet* with Dressler as Romeo and comedian Sam Bernard as Juliet. Her energy and invention never faltered, and her love affair with the audience continued unabated. She toured with Weber in 1906, and then made her first appearance in London at the Palace Theatre on October 28, 1907 in a variety show. She scored a great personal triumph at both the Palace and the Coliseum, but when she tried to put on two American musicals, *Philopoena* and *The Collegettes*, the British audiences found them less than amusing and she returned to New York in 1909, both bankrupt and severely ill with an ulcerated throat.

Nevertheless, she was acting again in a few months, and a year later she was established in the greatest success of her stage career, *Tillie's Nightmare* (1910). She played Tillie Blobbs, a boarding house drudge, and called the role her "nearest approach to immortality."<sup>29</sup> The show was "a howling hit"<sup>30</sup> and so was Dressler as the clumsy, dimwitted Tillie, but her performance never descended to the level of caricature. She went beneath the surface of the character and found poignancy as well as humor: "it was the sincerity of her [Tillie]—the tears that glistened back of every laugh that makes her live. . . . That is real comedy."<sup>31</sup> The highlight of the play was Dressler's rendition of "Heaven Will Protect the Working Girl," a song describing the tribulations of an innocent village maiden named Neuralgia, who leaves home for the wicked city to find work, and who, though besieged by "temptations, crimes, and follies/Villains, taxicabs, and trolleys,"<sup>32</sup> preserves her virtue by relying on a judicious combination of heavenly guidance and a shrewd instinct for self-preservation. The song became Dressler's signature tune, and, in a sense, a metaphor for her life.

In 1913, Dressler attempted to produce her own show, *Marie Dressler's Merry Gambol*, chiefly in order to give some of her fellow performers jobs. It only lasted eight performances, and she went to Los Angeles for a rest. While there, she was approached by Mack Sennett and Bauman of Keystone Pictures. Sennett wanted to film a comedy that would run an unprecedented six reels instead of the one or two usually allotted to comic scenarios. Dressler was then at the height of her fame as a stage star, and Sennett needed her name and reputation to get into "good houses" and attract audiences. Excited by the prospect of a new challenge, Dressler agreed, and the result was *Tillie's Punctured Romance* (1914), the first American feature length comedy. Dressler, always able to adjust herself to a new performance environment, proved "camera wise" from the start: "The thing was as alive to me as an audience and I loved it."<sup>33</sup> Ably supported by her two hand-picked co-stars, Mabel Normand and a relatively unknown English comedian named Charlie Chaplin, the picture was a great success and was reissued a number of times in both the USA and Britain.<sup>34</sup> Dressler made four more films for Sennett and for Goldwyn, including *Tillie's Tomato Surprise* (1915) and *Tillie Wakes Up* (1917), but they had little success, and her film career seemed destined for oblivion.

She might have returned to her profitable stage career, but World War I intervened. She plunged into war work. As she said, "it was pie for me! My whole life had been a fight!"<sup>35</sup> She made speeches, sold Liberty Bonds, and entertained servicemen, all at her own expense. On one drive, she made 149 speeches in 29 days, "never speaking to less than five thousand."<sup>36</sup> When the war was over, she devoted the same wholehearted enthusiasm and support to the 1919 Actors Equity Strike, which closed most of the country's theatres for five weeks in late summer. Dressler particularly sympathized with the chorus girls, who were subjected to long rehearsals without pay and arbitrary dismissals. She helped found the Chorus Equity Association, and served as its first president. The strike succeeded, winning actors and chorines long-overdue minimum rights, but the theatre managers singled out Dressler

and several of the other ringleaders of the movement for retaliation. She found herself on a virtual blacklist, unable to find work in any major theatre. Hollywood too was now closed to her. The producers considered her passe, a homely, aging comedienne with neither glamour nor mystique. She managed to get a role in a Broadway show, *The Dancing Girl*, in 1923, and did some one-reel comedies in France, "but by 1926 she was on the breadline,"<sup>37</sup> destitute and desperate.<sup>38</sup>

Rescue appeared in the person of scenarist Frances Marion. Dressler had befriended Marion during her silent film career, when Dressler had been a star and Marion a fledgling writer. Now Marion was one of the busiest and most highly paid screenwriters at MGM, and she used her talents and influence to revive Dressler's moribund career. She tailored a script, *The Callahans and the Murphys*, for her and persuaded Irving Thalberg to produce it in 1927. The film was eventually withdrawn because of pressure from Irish groups, but Marion found other vehicles for her, and, against all odds, Dressler slowly began to regain her popularity. The producers were bewildered. This was not the age of the comeback—washed up was washed up, and when you were down and out you were supposed to stay there. But she refused to play dead. At an age when other performers contemplated retirement, she was not afraid to start again. She brought with her the formidable array of skills she had acquired during her stage career, and "used every trick she had learned in fifty years as an entertainer to hold the audience she had snared in her old age."<sup>39</sup> As she herself said, "I am not one to live in the past. Yesterdays are only interesting as a background for today and for tomorrow."<sup>40</sup> She was not an immediate success, but more and more roles came her way. Her friend Will Rogers recalled:

She didn't say—I was a star, I was this, I was that. For a start she wanted to take anything, and did take anything, and really won her way up just as though she had really never amounted to anything before in her life—which she had.<sup>41</sup>

With the coming of sound, "Dressler went, overnight, from unusual to indispensable. For it turned out that she was even better in talkie comedy than in silent: the voice exactly matched the character."<sup>42</sup> While other silent film stars such as John Gilbert, Ramon Navarro, and even Mary Pickford fell by the wayside, Dressler's strong voice personality actually enhanced her career. Even so, the producers thought Dressler unlikely star material, since she conformed to no recognizable type, so in 1929 she bounced from studio to studio, MGM (*Chasing Rainbows*) to First National (*The Divine Lady*) to Paramount (*Dangerous Females*) to RKO (*The Vagabond Lover*). Nowhere was she offered a long-term contract. What the studios had yet to realize was that she transcended type, that, like Bette Davis, Carole Lombard, and Katherine Hepburn, she was unique.

That realization came in 1930 with *Anna Christie*. MGM had acquired the film rights to Eugene O'Neill's play and had cast Greta Garbo in the title role when Dressler announced that she wished to be considered for the part of Marthy, the waterfront drunk. The role was a serious one, and throughout



her career, Dressler had specialized in comedy. However, even during her vaudeville period, several important managers, including Sir Herbert Tree, Augustin Daly, and Louis Calvert, had speculated that a talented tragedienne might lurk beneath the raucous clown. When Frances Marion persuaded Thalberg to let Dressler test for the role, their judgment was vindicated.<sup>43</sup> Her performance as Marthy—the blear-eyed hag who provides the prostitute Anna with a mirror image of her future—was magnificent. The critics raved, the audiences were captivated, and MGM hastily offered her a contract.

However, the studio had something of a problem. They had signed a top box-office draw and hadn't the faintest idea "what to do with an ugly old woman who had, none could say how, stolen a picture from Greta Garbo."<sup>44</sup>

It was Louis B. Mayer who found a way out of the dilemma. He shrewdly realized that film audiences might be ready for a new type of screen mother—"a pithy, salty, battered veteran of life's wars who knew how to take care of herself and others."<sup>45</sup> Scripts were tailored to Dressler's specific talents: *Politics* (1931), *Prosperity* (1932), *Tugboat Annie* (1933), *Dinner at Eight* (1933), and *The Late Christopher Bean* (1933). MGM found in Wallace Beery the perfect foil for her, and together they made *Min and Bill*, "an adroit mixture of slapstick and sentiment"<sup>46</sup> that won Dressler the Best Actress Oscar in 1930.<sup>47</sup> Audiences were enraptured and seemed to agree wholeheartedly with the critic of the *Boston Herald*, who praised her characterizations of Marthy, Min, and Annie as "three of the finest . . . known either to the stage or studios."<sup>48</sup> Likewise, few will forget the sight of Dressler in *Dinner at Eight*, appraising Jean Harlow through her lorgnette as Harlow worries about the possibility of machinery replacing humans in every profession. "Oh my dear," replies Dressler, "that is something you need never worry about."

By this time, MGM was billing Dressler as "The World's Greatest Actress."<sup>49</sup> In 1931, she was named the favorite female star in a John Bull poll. In 1932 the *Motion Picture Herald* listed her name at the top of its annual poll to determine the country's biggest draw in films. The result was the same in 1933 in polls sponsored by both the *Herald* and the *Hollywood Reporter*.<sup>50</sup> The has-been was now the most popular star in the USA. Unfortunately, she was also dying. In the cancer that had stalked her for years, she had finally met an adversary that neither determination nor talent could overcome. She had fought until the end, giving three of her most memorable performances in the last year of her life, but by 1934, it was clear that she had only a few months to live. Her friends tried desperately to keep the truth from her, but Dressler was no fool, and all ruses failed until Louis B. Mayer, tyrant of endless Hollywood anecdotes, concocted a scheme to help her morale:

Dressler had been invited to take part in a benefit show back east, and Mayer, playing the money-grabbing producer, refused to let her accept, telling her that she would have to stay handy to begin work on her next picture.<sup>51</sup>

Dressler, furious, threw him out of her room, convinced, at least for a while, that she was recuperating. She died on July 28, 1934.

*Photoplay*, in memoriam, stated that "her appeal was universal."<sup>52</sup> President Harding once told her that "the world is better for your having lived,"<sup>53</sup> and writer David Thomson called her "as close to a Mother Courage as Hollywood could run."<sup>54</sup> But perhaps her old friend Will Rogers provided the best summation of both her and her contributions to her profession in a radio tribute broadcast just before her death:

Marie Dressler is the real queen of our movies. . . . There's been nothing—nothing like her career has developed in our whole moving picture industry; or the stage either, for that matter. . . . She was a star with a theatre full of people applauding her before—when moving pictures—the only way you could move 'em was to turn the leaves of a family album. That's when she first was a star. She was a sensational musical comedy star when your fathers and mothers had to get a marriage license to see Niagara Falls. She could sing. She had a beautiful voice. . . . She could dance in her younger days. And in addition, she could act. . . . But, of course, like everything else, as the years mowed her down, there was nothing in her line on the stage any more. But she came out here. . . . All they wanted in those days was—just give us beauty, . . . and they couldn't come too young or too dumb. And she's the first one to come out and kind of do away with that whole theory. She started the whole new thing: that you didn't have to be so beautiful, and that you didn't have to be so young. . . . There never was a career—one time big and then clear down, and now up again—like hers.<sup>55</sup>

#### Notes

1. Marie Dressler, *The Life Story of an Ugly Duckling* (New York: Robert M. McBride and Company, 1924), p. 3.

2. *Ibid.*, p. 2.

3. *Ibid.*

4. Albert E. Johnson, "Dressler, Marie," in *Notable American Women: 1607-1950*, Vol. 1, ed. by Edward T. James (Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press, 1971), p. 519.

5. Dressler, *Ugly Duckling*, p. 34.

6. *Ibid.*, p. 36.

7. *Ibid.*, p. 15.

8. *Ibid.*, p. 18.

9. One critic in Minneapolis burred that "She has a shape which would well win the golden apple." Dressler cherished the notice for years. See *Ugly Duckling*, p. 44.

10. Dressler, *Ugly Duckling*, p. 25.

11. *Ibid.*, p. 43.

12. *Ibid.*, p. 12.

13. *Ibid.*, p. 3.

14. As quoted in *Ibid.*, p. 7.

15. *Ibid.*, p. 25.

16. *Ibid.*, p. 3.

17. *Ibid.*, p. 41.

18. For example, Dressler recalls that "In *Three Black Cloaks*, I played the Queen, except when the King was drunk, and then I played the King." See *Ugly Duckling*, p. 42.

19. Dressler and Russell became good friends, and went bicycling around the reservoir in New York every morning. The visual image thus conjured up is rather overwhelming. See *Ugly Duckling*, p. 55, for more details.

20. Lewis C. Strang, *Prima Donnas and Soubrettes* (1900), p. 184, as quoted by Johnson in *Notable American Women: 1607-1950*, p. 520.

21. Daly at first refused to do the number, insisting that he would not "dance with a cow." However, when the routine drew tumultuous applause (especially when she carried him offstage), he gained a more favorable impression of her talents. See Dressler, *Ugly Duckling*, pp. 62-64.

22. Dressler, *Ugly Duckling*, p. 70.



23. Abel Green and Joe Laurie, Jr., *Show Biz* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1951), p. 27.
24. *Ibid.*, pp. 27-28.
25. Dressler, *Ugly Duckling*, p. 161.
26. *Ibid.*, p. 230.
27. *Ibid.*, p. 86.
28. Ethan Mordden, *Movie Star: A Look at the Women Who Made Hollywood* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1988), p. 125.
29. *Dictionary of American Biography*, Vol. 21, Supplement 1, ed. by Harris E. Starr (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1944), p. 265.
30. Dressler, *Ugly Duckling*, p. 112.
31. *Ibid.*, p. 111.
32. As quoted in *Ibid.*, p. 114.
33. *Ibid.*, p. 129.
34. David Shipman, *The Great Movie Stars: The Golden Years* (New York: Crown Publishers, Inc., 1970), p. 170.
35. Dressler, *Ugly Duckling*, p. 135.
36. *Ibid.*, p. 141.
37. Shipman, p. 171.
38. Characteristically, she refused to admit defeat. She talked the manager of the Ritz, an old friend, into letting her rent a tiny room underneath the eaves for what she would have had to pay at a boarding house. Thus she was able to tell her friends, "you can always reach me at the Ritz." Dressler was well aware of the importance of scenic environment. See Richard Griffith, *The Movie Stars* (Garden City, New York: Doubleday and Company, Inc., 1970), p. 284.
39. Griffith, p. 284.
40. Dressler, *Ugly Duckling*, p. 210.
41. Will Rogers, Foreword to Marie Dressler's *My Own Story*, as told to Mildred Harrington (New York: Blue Ribbon Books, Inc., 1934), p. viii. The book was published posthumously. Rogers Foreword consists of the text of a radio tribute delivered by him just before Dressler's death.
42. Greta Garbo, Dressler's friend (and, some sources suggest, her lover) also urged MGM to cast her, stating that she was "perfect" for the role. See Antoni Gronowicz, *Garbo* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1990), p. 311.
44. Griffith, p. 86.
45. *Ibid.*
46. Shipman, p. 172.
47. At the awards ceremony, Dressler carefully eased child star Jackie Cooper (age 10) off her shoulder, where he had fallen asleep, before she went forward to accept her Oscar.
48. *Boston Herald*, 5 August 1933, as quoted by Johnson in *Notable American Women: 1607-1950*, p. 521.
49. Shipman, p. 172.
50. *Ibid.*, p. 170.
51. Mordden, p. 128.
52. As quoted in Shipman, p. 172.
53. Dressler, *Ugly Duckling*, p. 165.
54. David Thomson, *A Biographical Dictionary of Film* (New York: William Morrow and Company, Inc., 1976), p. 148.
55. Will Rogers, Foreword to Marie Dressler's *My Own Story*, pp. vi-viii.

## A History of the Northwest Drama Conference: the 80'S & 90'S

RICHARD DAVIS

The 1980's and the first half of the 90's have brought significant changes to the Northwest Drama Conference. In 1980, the Conference was a regional organization of the American Theatre Association. By the mid-80's, ATA was dead and the Conference an independent corporation. In the 80's, NWDC finances were entirely dependent on the capacity of the host school to mount the Conference with its own funds until registration money could be received. Now the budget is sufficient to support the Conference. Throughout the 80's, the NWDC had serious questions about its own identity. Some of those questions are still being asked in the 90's, but new factors lead to more positive answers.

In trying to describe these changes, I am drawing on the minutes of various ATA Region IX and NWDC, Inc. Board meetings, ATA Correspondence in my possession, NWDC newsletters, and my own personal recollections and experiences.

The 1980's began with William "Bill" Harvey as Chief Regional Officer (CRO) filling in for David Hardaway who took advantage of an opportunity to study in Great Britain. Bill had been CRO in the 70's and was well known to the national ATA staff and to the NWDC. Since the Conference was officially Region IX of the American Theatre Association, when Bill presided at Board meetings, around the table were representatives from all of the five divisions that made up the American Theatre Association: The American Community Theatre Association, The Children's Theatre Association, The Secondary School Theatre Association, The University and College Theatre Association, and The Army Theatre Arts Association. In addition, representatives from the Thespian organizations and the various state theatre organizations in the region (Washington, Oregon, Alaska) were also welcome. The representatives from Washington Thespians and from The Washington Association of Theatre Artists (later Artists and Educators or WATAE) were the ones who usually attended. The representative of the American College

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Theatre Festival, considered an ATA program, was also present at these meetings.

The CRO was not then a member of the ATA National Board, but was expected to hold a regional meeting at the national ATA Convention every August. The NWDC always held its general conference in the first week of February, and American College Theatre Festival activities formed the core of the Conference with additional workshops provided by all of the divisions of the ATA region. A general business meeting was held at the Conference as well. The NWDC Board held three meetings during the year. One at the end of the February Conference to evaluate the event, a second in May to be held on the site and to allow everyone to view the facilities there, and third in the Fall to create a Conference schedule of events, select speakers, and decide issues regarding the upcoming Conference. From that point on, the Conference was placed in the hands of the host school with some assistance from the CRO and a set of guidelines for hosting the Conference.

### The End of ATA

Certainly the most dramatic NWDC occurrence of the 1980's was the break up of the American Theatre Association and the subsequent creation of The Northwest Drama Conference, Incorporated.

In 1983, when Jill Hoddick had succeeded to the CRO position with the resignation of Grant McKernie, I attended the national ATA Convention in Minneapolis as her representative since CRO's were again to become members of the national Board. I recall a scene from the end of the official Board Meeting at that Convention when the outgoing Treasurer, flourishing a cape and wearing a fortune teller's turban playfully turned over his office to the incoming Treasurer commenting on slight of hand and balancing the ATA budget. No one was overly concerned then that the organization's budget had been balanced—at the suggestion of the ATA's financial management firm—by hypothesizing increased memberships rather than by cutting expenditures. It would take more than funny costumes and magic tricks to keep ATA afloat.

When reality set in, the managerial firm was dropped, and the national office took over complete financial control of the organization's finances, imposing a freeze on expenditures to help reduce a debt of \$131,000. (Minutes of the Region IX General Membership Meeting, 10:05 P.M., August 14, San Francisco). But the ATA divisions and their leaders, especially Roger Gross of UCTA, seemed impervious to the Executive Committee's plans. UCTA members would no longer be able to have a free subscription to *Theatre Journal* with their membership. The executive officers emphasized that this belt tightening was temporary, but necessary for financial stability. A 5 1/2 hour San Francisco Convention Board meeting ended with an increase of national dues and grumbling acceptance of at least one more tight budget year.

Immediately, Twink Lynch, ACTA President, began questioning the financial figures reported at the national convention. By January, 1985, UCTA and ACTA, chaffing under their financial restrictions, were urging more autonomy for the divisions of ATA, talking individual incorporation for the divisions, criticizing the location of the national office in such an expensive city as Washington, D.C., and questioning the salaries of the national office staff.

A flurry of letters were exchanged throughout the winter months. In a February 25, 1985 Memorandum to Board of Directors of ATA and Barbara Salisbury-Willis CTAA President Elect on the Subject of the National Survey of ATA Membership, Doug Finney, ATA Secretary vented his frustration about all the criticism in circulation:

If you are getting the impression we are going nowhere it is because we are stuck in a kind of 'petty' quicksand (that's sinking fast!) Dear God, let us get some perspective on the overall picture and start to work together as a unit. Let us pull together, instead of pulling apart.

An official national Board meeting was announced for May 10 - 12 in Washington, D.C. On April 8, Roger Gross, sent out a particularly scathing letter to all UCTA members urging support for more division control of division finances and more division representation on the Executive Committee. He claimed that the national board meeting date had been deliberately chosen when he and other vocally critical leaders be unable to attend.

At the national Board meeting, a new dues plan was approved, giving some money to the divisions. The ATA President agreed to answer the Roger Gross letter in the ATA Theatre News and correct his inaccurate charges. A task force was created to study the possibility of moving the national office, and the Executive Director announced that she had located new quarters in Reston, Virginia, that would be cheaper than the present quarters. Division and regional representatives were placed on the Finance Committee; and the Board also approved a study of goals, mission and structure of ATA to be conducted by the Planning and Development Committee. This was a genuine attempt at meeting the criticism of the major divisions.

In the Summer 1985 "NWDC Newsletter," Volume 1, number 2, I reported that the ATA Treasurer had stated that "...barring any wild expenditures of ATA in the next year's budget, the present debt may be able to be retired by late 1986 or early 1987." This was "something of a miracle" and the result of "careful management...and the very tough decisions by the board in San Francisco."

But by June, 1985, ACTA was already seeking to separate from ATA. When the national Convention was held in Toronto it turned into a public debacle! At the general meeting, the President could barely control the membership. People shouted down others and fought for the floor microphones. When the insults and anger of the official board meetings had ended, every attempt had been made to hold the organization together and to consider a total restructuring. A task force was set up to create a new organizational structure, the Washington dues plan was abandoned, and a sum of \$3500

was set aside for division journals with the entire amount going to UCTA for the next two years.

But the damage had been done! The fall out from the Toronto Convention resulted in the loss of 2000 ATA members, or a total of \$128,000 according to a February 21, 1986 letter to the ATA membership from its President, Leonard Leone and its President Elect, August Staub.

At the 1986 NWDC in Ellensburg, Washington, I reported a plan had been drawn up between ATA's lawyers and its two major creditors which would enable the organization to survive, hold its convention and continue its services." I also reported that the national staff had been reduced, and the national office was moving to cheaper quarters.

The letter to the ATA membership from Leone and Staub, mentioned earlier, sent on February 21, 1986. It explained the dire need for financial assistance and asked members to donate \$15, \$20, or more to the cause of keeping ATA solvent.

The ATA situation came to a head in April of 1986. A telephone conference call was set for Saturday, April 5 at 1 P.M. Eastern Time in lieu of trying to finance transportation for the regular Spring board meeting. By the time April 5 arrived, all the ACTA officers had resigned to form a separate organization for community theatre, and , others were planning to meet in New York City to consider other new theatre organizations. The conference call became the last official board meeting of the ATA. The financial deficit was now so devastating that the Executive Committee could do nothing but recommend one of three options: 1. Chapter 7 bankruptcy—the safest, but most expensive solution (approximately \$25 to \$35,000—which we as an organization did not have); 2. Bail out, with a party taking over ATA and running it, probably one of its creditors; 3. Winding down, slowly bringing the Association to a halt. This last option would leave the board members liable; however, the creditors indicated they would not pursue legal action.

Implicit in this third choice was the fact that all activity of ATA would have to cease and no one could use the ATA name to start up a new organization without being hit with all the old ATA debt. The conference call board agreed that "The American Theatre Association cease business operations and that the National Association staff be directed to wind down the operation by April 30, 1986." (from the minutes of the meeting and my notes).

The August convention was to have been ATA's 50th anniversary celebration; instead, there was no ATA convention. As officers terms of service came to an end, business simply wound down for good.

In the April, 1986 Volume of the NWDC Newsletter, Volume II, Number 1 (the date is erroneously given as 1985 in the masthead, but it was 1986), I asked the following questions of the regional membership: "What will become of Region IX now that ATA is no more? ...can we keep it going without the attachment to ATA? Should a new regional organization be established in the Northwest? Should ACTF be the basis for a new organization or only

a part of it? Should the NWDC continue but with more territory in its Northwest Region?" Since Region IX officers would be in existence through August, anyone interested in "planning for a new regional organization" was invited to come to the May 18, 1986 Board meeting at Mt. Hood, Community College.

At that May meeting, the Board voted to incorporate the Northwest Drama Conference, and Richard Leinaweaver, Helen Ayers, Richard Melo, and Gwenn Cornwell were appointed to draw up Constitution and By-Laws for the new organization. The Board also voted to extend the terms of the NWDC officers through October or until new By-Laws or election of officers could be held, whichever came first. By September 28, 1986, the new By-Laws were presented to the Board and approved for presentation to the

Conference in February. The board agreed to immediately begin operating under these By-Laws.

Basically, the slate of officers which had been proposed when we were still Region IX was carried over to the February, 1987 Conference for an official election with the new By-Laws dividing the old Secretary/Treasurer position into two separate positions and necessitating a nomination for the Treasurer's position. Another change in the By-Laws gave the Vice President charge of the Conference program preparation with the assistance of the host institution's representative.

At the general business meeting of the February, 1987 Conference held at Mt. Hood Community College in Gresham, Oregon, the new By-Laws were officially approved with several minor changes, and Richard Davis was elected President; Michael Hood, Vice President; Richard Leinaweaver, Secretary; and Millie Stenehjelm, Treasurer. With the approval of By-Laws, paper work to achieve tax exempt status from the IRS could begin. After a year long process, the President and the Treasurer with legal assistance from attorneys were able to achieve this status in 1988, not under the 501 c 3 category, but under the 501 c 6 category. This necessitated a minor change in the By-Laws which was finally approved in 1993.

In the Northwest Drama Conference, Incorporated, By-Laws, the purpose of the organization is stated as "encouraging the highest possible standards of theatre throughout the Pacific Northwest, and facilitating the interchange of theatre groups, person and ideas through an annual theatre conference." Officers of both the NWDC and the ACTF as well as one representative from any other member organization were to make up the governing board. One particular paragraph of the By-Laws is significant. Article VII, 3, states that "Since its inception, the American College Theatre Festival has enjoyed a special and symbiotic relationship with the NWDC. Thus, when possible, the Festival and Conference will continue to be offered concurrently and cooperatively."

### Conference Problems, Development, and Change

In the early 80's, without the help and support of four major colleges, there would have been no Northwest Drama Conference. These four schools—

Western Oregon State College (then Oregon College of Education), Central Washington University, Mt. Hood Community College, and Washington State University—were willing to risk their own theatre budgets over and over again to keep the Conference running.

In 1980, although Bonnie Wallace-Hoffman hosted a successful Conference at Bellevue with Edward Albee as guest speaker, the Northwest Drama Conference was bankrupt and searching for a school that would serve as host. The 1979 Conference in Portland had been an attempt to host an ATA Western regional mini-convention but had been unable to draw attendance from outside the region to pay all the Conference bills. Conference officers had to pay some of the more outstanding speakers' fees out of their own pockets.

Western Oregon State College in Monmouth came forward to host the Conference in 1981. No one was too excited about going to an obscure, "dry" town in Western Oregon, but no one else would put up the money. Richard Davis, the host, made phone contact with Sam Shepard who agreed in October to come if he could get away from filming in Texas in time. Surprisingly, he got away, drove up from San Francisco in his pickup with his son and a neighbor boy, held a question and answer session and conducted a playwriting workshop at the Conference; then, when his wife called to find out if he had the boys with him, he left for home. The Conference attracted 359 people and brought in \$3808, but left the WOSC Theatre Department \$548.00 in the red.

Richard Leinawever of Central Washington University offered to risk his school's finances for the 1982 Conference. The Ellensburg, Washington location, was centrally located; and the campus theatre complex had recently been remodeled. CWU could also provide a conference center building to house ACTF students and other conference members. By not paying for a speaker, and by drawing a large number of children's theatre participants, the '82 Conference managed a profit of \$2000, plus enough money to pay WOSC's \$500 deficit.

Richard Melo of Mt. Hood Community College in Gresham, Oregon agreed to host the 1983 Conference. Again no speaker was hired. Complaints were registered about there being no speaker but concern was not great enough to add an extra \$5 to Conference admission fees in order to obtain one.

Several problems were plaguing the Conference. The ACTF activities—Irene Ryan, costume and set design, critic, and the playwriting competitions—were becoming the major aspects of the Conference. It was becoming increasingly difficult to obtain workshops from the various ATA divisions in the region. Both Grant McKernie and Jill Hoddick as CRO's beat the bushes to find people willing to share their talents at the Conference; Jill took over responsibility for finding all workshop presenters, but her efforts were frequently frustrated. At one point she suggested holding the ACTF every year and the ACTF every other year to reduce the burden of finding

workshop presenters. Consideration was given to incorporating the Conference simply to be able to gain access to grant money for Conference program development. George Meshke, Regional ACTF Chairman, was quite concerned about the number and quality of workshops and activities at the Conference since his ACTF students made up most of the Conference attendance and paid most of the Conference fees. The Secondary School Association complained that regional high schools were not able to support financially student or teacher attendance at NWDC. As CRO, I attended the WATA meeting in Seattle and the Oregon Thespian Convention trying to show regional interest and encourage high school participation in NWDC, but the best solution seemed to be an earlier call for workshop presenters each year.

The 1984 Conference was hosted by Richard Slabaugh at Washington State University in Pullman. The NWDC paid for playwright Mark Medoff, a fine speaker who drew a good crowd. It may seem ridiculous now, but in those days, the thought of traveling to Pullman in Winter seemed like journeying to the ends of the earth for Conference participants. But most schools came with their Irene Ryan students, prepared to attend the entire Conference from beginning to end and did indeed stay.

In 1985, the same four schools began a second round of NWDC hosting. Richard Davis of Western Oregon State College again hosted the Conference with Elizabeth McCann of the of the producing team of McCann & Nugent as speaker. In addition to Summer Theatre auditions, it was at this Conference that the Board decided to follow the lead of other regional theatre groups and hold its first professional auditions. Unfortunately, few of the professional theatres sent representatives, and disappointed students who came for the auditions had to be reimbursed. More successful were high school interviews with college representatives also begun that year. The Board also began to publish a quarterly newsletter in 1985.

Although Michael Hood from the University of Alaska in Anchorage volunteered to host the 1986 Conference, the Board voted return to Central Washington University. This time Milo Smith was our host. The speaker was Horace Robinson, founder of the Northwest Drama Conference, and we celebrated the 40th anniversary of NWDC. Neither the Board nor Horace Robinson realized at the time that we were really two years too early for a 40th anniversary celebration, since the Conference had been reinstituted in 1948 not 1946. It was ironic for us to celebrate 40th anniversary, when in Washington, D.C., the ATA national organization was in its final death throes.

Between the 1986 and 1987 Conferences when the ATA folded and the Northwest Drama Conference Board met to incorporate, Arden Flom, ACTF Chair, asserted ACTF influence more intensely. He succeeded in having the Board agree that no events should be scheduled at the Conference during the in-house ACTF critiques or during the time of the major productions or speaker, and that any changes in ACTF aspects of the Conference program schedule must be approved by the ACTF regional chair. He also requested

that ACTF be allowed to receive 75% of all student registration monies, a request which after long discussion was denied; however \$500 of NWDC fee money was given to ACTF to help pay its outstanding bills.

In 1987, the Conference was hosted again by Richard Melo and Mt. Hood Community College. ACTF and NWDC split the cost to hire Doug Getzoff to handle the technical theatre problems for the evening performances since Mt. Hood had lost its tech director. Gordon Davidson of Los Angeles's Mark Taper Forum was guest speaker. It was at this Conference that the By-Laws and incorporation of the Northwest Drama Conference were approved. The University of Alaska had asked again to host the Conference, and Richard Slabaugh of WSU reported on Alaskan plane fares; but the Board considered them too high and voted to hold the next Conference at Pullman, Washington again.

Going into the 1988 Conference, the Northwest Drama Conference Incorporated had a Treasury of \$4489.02 in savings and \$461.17 in checking accounts. Washington State was granted seed money by the Board for preliminary Conference expenses. I may be in error, but I believe that this was the first time that the host school was actually given any amount of preliminary money to set up a separate account to fund the Conference. Another innovation was part of the 1988 Conference as well. That was the introduction of the NWDC Design Critique. Jill Hoddick, Randy Wischmeier, Carol Wolf Clay, Walter Ensign, and Douglas Getzoff created this event, one of the first new activities of the NWDC Incorporated.

The Pullman Conference was hosted by George Caldwell and Jerry Turner, Artistic Director of the Oregon Shakespeare Festival and Gregory Falls, Artistic Director and Founder of Seattle's A Contemporary Theatre (ACT) were guest speakers. When it came time to decide where the next Conference would be held, Richard Leinaweaver, back from a sabbatical in Costa Rica, moved that the 1989 Conference be held in Anchorage, Alaska. Millie Stenehjelm seconded the motion, and the vote was 4 in favor, 2 opposed, with 1 abstention.

Elaborate plans were made by Charlotte Headrick, new ACTF Regional Chair, to hold one round of Irene Ryan preliminary adjudications at the University of Portland and another audition before the finals at the Conference. Conference dates were adjusted to Friday, Saturday, and Sunday to fit ACTF regulations, and the Ryder Truck Company agreed to barge sets to Anchorage from the U.S. mainland.

There had also been concern for establishing an official journal of the NWDC. At the May Board meeting, 1988, Richard Davis appointed George Caldwell as Editor *pro tem* of this journal. (May 22, 1988 NWDC Meeting Minutes).

When the time for the 1989 Conference time came, the Alaskan weather was great, but in Washington and Oregon there was a snow storm that kept planes from leaving on time and made travel close to impossible. Still, Leroy

Clark and the University faculty made the Conference a success. John Randolph, stage, motion picture, and television actor, was the major speaker.

With the success of this Alaskan Conference, the Northwest Drama Conference Incorporated moved into a new era. The four schools that had kept the Conference afloat for almost a decade still remained a fundamental part of the Conference, but a milestone had been passed in the history of the organization.

Several other changes were also occurring at this time. A redistribution of the ACTF regions presented problems and pointed a new direction for the organization testing the "symbiotic relationship" between ACTF and NWDC. Since the ATA days, the region had been composed of Washington, Oregon, and Alaska; but to economize, the Kennedy Center and the national ACTF added Idaho, Montana, and Wyoming to the Northwest Region and arranged for Shirley Hennigan to succeed Charlotte Headrick as ACTF Regional Chairperson and for Virginia Quinley, who had been scheduled to succeed to Charlotte's position, to succeed Shirley instead.

How would the NWDC adjust to this new region view? Would it open its doors to members from Idaho, Montana, and Wyoming or would NWDC and ACTF go their separate ways? Would its present members be willing to travel as far as Montana or Wyoming to attend a Northwest Drama Conference, or would some shake-up be necessary in the ACTF/NWDC "symbiotic relationship?" Michael Hood, the new NWDC president, took the position that the organization would open its doors to membership from Idaho, Montana and Wyoming and encourage conferences to be held in cities from these states as well. When Ellensburg volunteered to host the Conference in 1992, the Board postponed a decision until it had investigated offers from other more Eastern states.

The 1990 Conference was held in Bellingham, Washington on the campus of Western Washington University, hosted by Dennis Cattrell, with actor Roscoe Lee Browne as guest speaker.

President Hood also established a NWDC award for those who having made "a consistent contribution to the NWDC." It was called the NWDC President's Award and was presented for the first time at Bellingham, Washington to William Harvey, former Region IX CRO.

The 1991 Conference went to Eastern Oregon State College at La Grande, Oregon and was hosted by Mark Kuntz, Lyle Schwarz, and Barbara Alksofer. EOSC provided a new arts facility for the NWDC activities and introduced an event called Theatre Sports—a late evening series of improvisation contests—which proved the highlight of the Conference for most of the college students. Ed Asner was the surprise speaker when Wendy Wasserstein was unable to attend because of her reluctance to fly during the Gulf War.

The attempt to bring new membership into the Conference increased when the University of Idaho and Washington State University shared responsibilities for the 1992 Conference. Attenders shuttled between the two campuses and were treated to Megan Terry's theatre company in performance.

Conference audition opportunities continued to develop for college students in the region. Hosting this Conference were Bruce Brockman, Forrest Sears, George Caldwell, Lou Furman, and the other members of their faculties.

Everyone expected to go farther East in 1993 to the University of Montana but when administrative changes and program accreditation obligations made that impossible, C.V. "Ben" Bennett of Oregon State University in Corvallis, and Richard Davis of Western Oregon State College in Monmouth agreed to share responsibilities for the Conference. OSU took charge of the Irene Ryan activities and the first day of the Conference, and WOSC was responsible for the other three Conference days and the evening productions. Guest speakers were John Frohnmayer, former Chairman of the National Endowment for the Arts, and Christopher Durang, noted comic playwright, who read aloud a one act play satirizing the Jesse Helms censorship mentality.

Michael Hood had appointed George Caldwell permanent Editor of the NWDC Journal, entitled *Northwest Theatre Review*. The first issue was presented to the membership at the 1993 Conference. Every attempt was made to make the journal a serious publication for theatre research. At George Caldwell's urging, Christopher Durang agreed to allow the *Northwest Theatre Review* to publish his one act play in its second issue which appeared at the 1994 Conference.

In 1994 the NWDC, true to its new easterly policy, traveled to Boise, Idaho, and the campus of Boise State University to be hosted by Stephen Buss and his faculty. Joanna Gleason, the Broadway actress and TV performer was guest speaker. Ginny Quinley, Regional ACTF Chairperson, in her comments printed in the 1994 Conference program, states her pleasure at the NWDC's "union with USITT." The merger of NWDC, KC-ACTF and USITT "benefits all we serve." Her remarks referred to the fact that the northwest chapters of USITT had been regularly sponsoring activities, workshops and speakers at the last few Northwest Drama Conferences and had now become a permanent part of the Conference.

With Jack Watson hosting the 1995 Conference at the University of Oregon, the Conference came back to its original roots once again. It is quite a different Conference now than in the early 80's. Almost all speaker funding is done through host school administrators, deans and student governments, freeing the NWDC Treasury to be used for special events and workshops and to fund the publication of the Northwest Theatre Review. Whereas the Conference used to alternate North and South between Washington and Oregon, it now tends to alternate between West and East within the boundaries of its enlarged region. The 1996 Conference is being held in Laramie, Wyoming, hosted by the University of Wyoming.

One can still ask if further changes in the make-up of KC-ACTF will affect the future of the Conference, or if, given tight economic conditions, participants will be able to travel to far-flung parts of the new region; but the

answer is likely to be "yes," and a "yes" that will strengthen the NWDC rather than weaken it. The foremost necessity for the solid growth of the NWDC's future will be a group of colleges and universities who are willing to undertake the considerable task of hosting the Conference. It is, after all, the hard work and camaraderie of the region's theatre faculty members and their desire to encourage and promote theatre amongst their students that has been, is now, and always will be at the heart of a successful Northwest Drama Conference.

#### OFFICERS OF THE NORTHWEST DRAMA CONFERENCE FROM 1980-PRESENT

##### Region IX. ATA:

1980

Chief Regional Officer:	David Hardaway	Gonzaga U
Vice Regional Officer:	James Ostholthoff	Lewis & Clark
Secretary/Treasurer:	Sarah Jane Scott	

1981-82

Chief Regional Officer:	Bill Harvey	Olympic College
Vice Regional Officer:	Ed Collier	Pacific College
Secretary/Treasurer:	Sarah Jane Scott	

1982-83

Chief Regional Officer:	Grant McKernie	U of Or
Vice Regional Officer:	Jill Hoddick	U of Portland
Secretary/Treasurer:	Richard Davis	WOSC

1983-1984

Chief Regional Officer:	Jill Hoddick	U of Portland
Vice Regional Officer:	Thomas Gressler	Linfield
Secretary/Treasurer:	Richard Davis	WSOC

1984-1987 (including the interim until incorporation)

Chief Regional Officer:	Richard Davis	WSOC
Vice Regional Officer:	Thomas Gressler	Linfield
Secretary/Treasurer:	Richard Leinaweaver	CWU

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The Northwest Drama Conference, Incorporated:

1987-1989

President:	Richard Davis	WSOC
Vice President:	Michael Hood	U of Al, A
Secretary:	Richard Leinaweaver	CWU
Treasurer:	Millie Stenebjem	Yakima Valley

1989-1991

President:	Michael Hood	U of Al, A
Vice President:	Douglas Getzoff	WSOC
Secretary:	Richard Leinaweaver	CWU
Treasurer:	Millie Stenebjem	Yakima Valley

1991-1993

President:	Michael Hood	U of Al, A
Vice President:	Douglas Getzoff (91-92)	WSOC
	Mark Kuntz (92-93)	EOSC
Secretary:	Bruce Brockman	U of Id
Treasurer:	Millie Stenebjem	Yakima Valley

1993-1994

President:	Mark Kuntz	EOSC
Vice President:	Jack Watson	U of Or
Secretary:	Bruce Brockman	U of Id
Treasurer:	Millie Stenebjem	Yakima Valley

1994-1995

President:	Mark Kuntz	EOSC
Vice President:	Jack Watson	U of Or
Secretary:	Rebecca Hilliker	U of Wy
Treasurer:	Millie Stenebjem	Yakima Valley
Journal Editor:	George Caldwell	WSU

1995-1997

President:	Rebecca Hilliker	U of Wy
Vice President:	David Edgecombe	U of Al, A
Secretary:	Sara Edlin-Marlowe	Gonzaga U
Treasurer:	Millie Stenebjem	Yakima Valley
Journal Editor:	George Caldwell	WSU

ACTF REGIONAL CHAIRS FROM 1980 - PRESENT

William Dore	Seattle U
George Meshke	Yakima Valley CC
Arden Flom	Everett CC
Charlotte Headrick	OSU
Shirley Hennigan	Lewis & Clark, Id
Virginia Quinley	Columbia Basin CC
Mark Kuntz	EOSC