

The origins of Theatre

The impulse to create theatre is universal

Storytelling and Imitation

Religious observance and Rituals Formal, repeated ceremonies

Golden age:

People came together and they achieved great things in all fields including Theatre.

5th century B.C.E. in Athens, Greece

Western Theatre

Began with Greek and Roman Theatre

Known for tragedies by Aeschylus, Sophocles, and Euripides

Tragedy

The tragedy was the most admired form of drama at the Greek Festivals.

Approximately 900 tragedies were produced in Athens during the 5th century B.C.E., of which 31 have survived all by 3 dramatists.

Dionysus

The God of Wine, Fertility, and Revelry

Historians believe that Greek drama originated out of the dithyrambic chorus, a group of **50** men who sang and danced a hymn praising Dionysus.

Thespis

In 6th B.C.E. he stepped out of the chorus and became an actor.

Theatre and Religion:

- In Athens, spring Festival called City Dionysia, honoring the god Dionysus.
- 3 days devoted to tragedies
- Time aside for 5 Comedies (5 comedies, not 5 days)
- Satyr Plays :Half-men and Half-goats
- 11 months before the festival the government would appoint a choregus and choose the plays

- The playwright was the director

Aeschylus

First important Greek dramatist and therefore the first important Western dramatist

He brought on a second actor

And reduced the chorus to 12 from fifty

Dealt with noble families and their families

Were praised for their lyrical poetry, dramatic structure, and their intellectual content

Master of Trilogy

His best one is Oresteia

Oresteia

the murder of Agamemnon by Clytemnestra, the murder of Clytemnestra by Orestes, the trial of Orestes, the end of the curse on the House of Atreus and the pacification of the Erinyes

Sophocles

Built on Aeschylus

Chorus to 15

Added a 3rd actor each played up to 8 different characters

Particularly adept at dramatic construction, introducing characters and information skillfully, and building swiftly to a climax

Euripides

More of a rebel

Most Modern of the 3

The sympathetic portrayal of female characters, increased Realism, mixture of Tragedy with Melodrama and Comedy, and skeptical treatment of the gods

Pattern and Plot in Greek Tragedy

The opening scene, the chorus enters

An episode between characters

The first choral song

Alternations between character episodes and choral songs then comes the final episode

The Chorus

"The chorus was a key and unique element of Greek drama, never again being used in the same way".

Represented ordinary citizens

Reacted the way the audience might react

The audience could identify with them

They gave background information necessary for understanding the plot

Represented a moderate balance between the extreme behaviors of the principal characters.

Offered philosophical observations and conclusions about what happened.

It is important to note that the choral passages were sung and danced.

They were all men.

Greek Comedy

Later in the 5th century, the festival in the winter

Greek Comedy is known as Old Comedy

End of 4th century New Comedy

Aristophanes (c. 448-c. 380 B.C.E.).

Old Comedy

Makes fun of social, political, or cultural conditions

The characters are recognizable

Socrates

SNL

Do not have a climactic structure (they don't take place within a short span of time or in one locale)

They have a large cast of characters

New Comedy

Romantic and Domestic problems

Romans

Founded 750 B.C.E.

500 B.C.E. The Roman Republic

3rd century B.C.E Punic wars= first contact with Greece

1st century B.C.E Julius Caesar made himself dictator

Brutus defeated by Mark Anthony and Octavius

27 B.C.E. The Roman Empire

Worshiped gods that were counterparts of the Greek deities, as well as a large number of other divinities

Roman Theatre

Strongly influenced by the Greek

Mostly Greek New Comedy which they then developed popular Comedy

Also influenced by Etruria, Northwest of Rome

240 B.C.E. Ludi Romani dedicated to Jupiter, Roman counterpart of Zeus

Pantomime

A single dancer, a chorus, and a musical accompanies

Ballet

Emperors and members of nobility

Plautus (c. 254-184 B.C.E)

Comedy

Based on Greek New Comedy

Domestic situations/Romance

The parasite who lives off others and is motivated by sensuality

Most of the dialogue is sung

Terence (c. 185-159 B.C.E.)

More literary and less exaggerated

Less singing more spoken

Seneca (c. 4 B.C.E. - 65 C.E.)

Tragedy

Onstage stabbing, murders, and suicides

Supernatural beings

Influenced Shakespeare

Hamlet influenced by revenge Tragedy

Theatre Production in Rome

- Local government hired an acting troupe
- The dominus, leading actor, made all the arrangements
- Up to 6 actors
- Detailed pantomime and broad physical gestures
- Facial expressions were not important since full linen head masks were worn

Roman Theatre

- A semicircular, sloped seating area
- An orchestra
- Stage House (Scaena)
- Average capacity 25000

Decline of Roman Theatre

- Constantinople
- Christianity

The Play And The Playwright

- The script/ The play/ The text = Blueprint for a production = Provides a plan for the production
- Playwright = Dramatist :
 - Chooses how to tell the story
 - Selects the dramatic episodes and how they unfold
 - Write the dialogue

Aspects of a script

- Selecting the specific subject of the play
- Determining focus
- Establishing purpose
- Developing dramatic structure
- Creating dramatic characters

Establishing a point of view

Subject

The matter of drama is always human beings. People are invariably in the center

What aspect of human beings to write about

Imaginary story based on a fantasy or a nightmare

Focus

Who or what to focus on

In determining focus, a playwright may need to decide how to interpret the characters and events of an existing story

In doing so the playwright might change the order of the events

The playwright's gender might also influence the structure and that feminist dramas are less linear and less traditional in building dramatic tension

Plays can be tightly or loosely structured

Plays unfold through time, developing like a living organism. We experience the development and become aware of the structure

Essentials of Dramatic Structure

- Plot
- Action
- Conflict
- Strongly opposed forces
- A reasonable balance between the opposed forces

Plot

The arrangement of events of the selection and order of scenes in a play.

Secret scheme or plan

Describe the sequence of scenes or events in a novel

Dramatic plot = based on a story

Story: a full account of an event or series of events

Plot: a selection and arrangement of scenes from a story for presentation on stage.

What happens not what is talked about.

Action

The word drama = Greek root = dran = to do or to act

At its heart theatre involves action

Conflict

The collision or opposition of persons or forces that gives rise to the dramatic action

The playwright must devise means by which characters will face challenges and be tested in a very short time

Test and the character's reaction to it, is one way that the meaning of a play is brought out

Strongly Opposed Forces

People in a conflict in a play are fiercely determined to achieve their goals; moreover, they are powerful adversaries to one another.

They have clear strong goals or objectives

Balance of Forces

The people on opposite sides must be more or less evenly matched

Scenery

Set Designer

Help set the tone & style of the production

Establish the period

Develop a concept consistent with the director's vision

Provide a central image or metaphor, where appropriate

Ensure that scenery is coordinated with other production elements

Solve practical design problems

Tone & Style

Style = the manner in which the work is done: how does the scenery look? How is the language used?

Establishing Period

In addition to time and place, the setting can also tell us what kinds of characters a play is about

Design Concept

A unifying idea carried out visually

When the time and place of a play have been shifted

Central Image or Metaphor

Consistent with the play and have its own integrity

Should add up to a complete visual universe for the play

Coordinating Scenery with the Whole

In line with the playwright's intent and the director's concept

Solving Practical Design Problems

Line: the outline of the silhouette of elements on stage

Mass: the overall bulk of the weight of scenic elements

Composition: the balance and arrangement of elements

Texture: the feel projected by surfaces and fabrics

Color: the shading and contrasts of color combinations

Physical layout

Fit into a certain stage and accommodate the performers

Room off stage for changing

Ground plan

Right stage/left stage/down stage/upstage

Eighteenth century= slope toward the audience

Materials and Devices

Stage floor/ trapdoors

Wagon/ electronically or stagehands/musical theatre

Treadmill

Turntable

Fly loft

Flat

Props

The Process

- Read the script and develop ideas/ rough sketches
- Director and designer meet for preliminary ideas
- Preliminary sketches/thumbnailed sketches
- The idea/rendering
- Small scale 3 dimension /CAD

Light

Stage Lighting

- The last element of visual design
- Most developed
- Most of the advances last 100 years

LIGHTING

- For the first 2000 years, outdoors and during day
- Illumination
- Playwright's language and imagination
- 1600 CE moved indoors, used candles and oil lamps
- DeLouthembourg: above the stage, gauze curtains and silk screens, colors
- 1785: Argand lamp: glass chimney and cylindrical wick= brighter light
- 1803, London, gaslights = light intensity
- 1879: incandescent lamp = safe, intensity, and control

FUNCTIONS AND OBJECTIVES

- Provide visibility
- Reveal shapes and forms
- Provide a focus onstage and create visual compositions
- Assist in creating mood and reinforcing style
- Help establish time and place

- Establish a rhythm of visual movement
- Reinforce a central visual image, establish visual information, or both

Visibility

- Illumination
- Performers
- Mood is important but we need to see what is happening

Shape and form

- Usually, flat
- Side, top, and behind

Focus and composition

- Beams of light beamed at a particular area
- Keeps the audience focused
- Actors moving without being in the beam
- Take the audience on an interesting visual journey

Mood and style

- Without the audience noticing
- Realistic or nonrealistic

Time and place

- Color, shade, and intensity

Rhythm

- Time continuum
- In line with the director's vision

Reinforcement of the central image

- Consistent with the other elements
- Most flexible and most atmospheric

Properties of stage lighting

- Intensity: dimmers

Color: colored material : gel, plastic = support the other designs

Distribution: position and type

Movement: changing focus

Costumes

Clothes

Personal

Actor and their costume

Position and status

Sex

Occupation

Relative flamboyance or modesty

Degree of independence or regimentation

What is one dressed for

Objectives of Costume Design

Help establish the style of the production

Locale and historic period

Nature of each character

Relationships between characters

Theme

Meet the needs of individuals

Consistency with the whole production

The Work

Pulling: Rented = Stitchers

Built: Shop supervisor and Costume Designer

Line: Do they fit?

Color

Fabric

Collaborators

Shopper

Cutter-Draper

The Costume Designer's firsthand or a lead stitcher

Design assistants: distressing

Wardrobe Supervisor

Wardrobe crew

Makeup

Modern Theatre

Hairstyles and Wigs: Hair and wig specialist

Masks: An extension of the performer

Stages

- Proscenium 前舞台
- Areana ?
- Thrust 伸展式舞台
- Created ?
- Black Box

Proscenium

This is the frame stage

Broadway-style theatres (百老汇风格)

The audience on three sides

First introduced in Italy during the Renaissance (文艺复兴)

Not an arch, a rectangle

Also called the Forth Wall

House

Rake = Away from the audience

Orchestra (管弦乐团)

Box

It was popular in America because it was popular in Europe

Areana

Oldest stage forms

After the World War II in the US

Circle theatre or theatre-in-the-round

Seats are all around

Up a few feet the main floor

Offers more intimacy

All you need is a large room

Design

Tent Theatres

Thrust

Three-quarters seating/U shapes

Most widely used

The other two mixed

Classical Greek for comedy and Tragedy

Platform stage: Elevated sometimes call a trestle stage

Wagon stage

Corral Spanish Golden age: located in the courtyard of a series of adjoining buildings

Created and Found Spaces

Jerzy Grotowski (1933-1999) -> closed look at the physical arrangement of the playing area and its relationship to the audience/developed theatre space

Antonin Artaud (1896-1948) = unstable but prophetic

Site-specific companies = non-theatre Buildings/Adapted Spaces/Street Theatre/Multifocus Theatre

The Black Box

Movable and flexible

Empty rectangle

The Director

Role of director

The first person to become involved with the creative process

works most closely with the actors

works with the playwright

coordinating other aspects

Stage manager communicates with the director's conceptual vision

The spine of the play

Main action -> what is the primary objective

A working hypothesis that gives directors a foundation and a through-line on which to base their analysis

Provides nerve center

The style of the production

After finding the spine it is time to decide a style

The way to play is presented

The directorial concept

Drives from a controlling idea, vision or point of view that the director feels is appropriate to the play

should create a unified theatrical experience for the audience

Other things

A central image or metaphor

A concept and purpose

The Auteur Director

The French word for Author

After the World War II

The authors of their own films

Taking responsibility for shaping every element in the productions including the script

The Postmodern Director

Taking apart a text, often called deconstruction, in which portions of a text may be altered, deleted, taken out of context, or reassembled

The abandonment of a narrative or linear structure in a theatre piece

Unfamiliar, cross-gender, muticultural casting

Casting

Casting a mold

Fitting performers into roles

Personality and physical appearances

Typecasting

when a performer closely resembles in real life the character to be enacted

Dramaturg

german word meaning "Dramatic Advisor"

Europe = Over a century

US = Relatively new

Also, literary manager

works on literary and historical issues with members of the artistic team

Duties

Discovering promising new plays

working with playwrights

identifying significant plays from the past that may have been overlooked

Preparing materials for teachers whose students may be attending the show

Writing articles for the show

Conducting research on previous productions

Research on the criticism etc.