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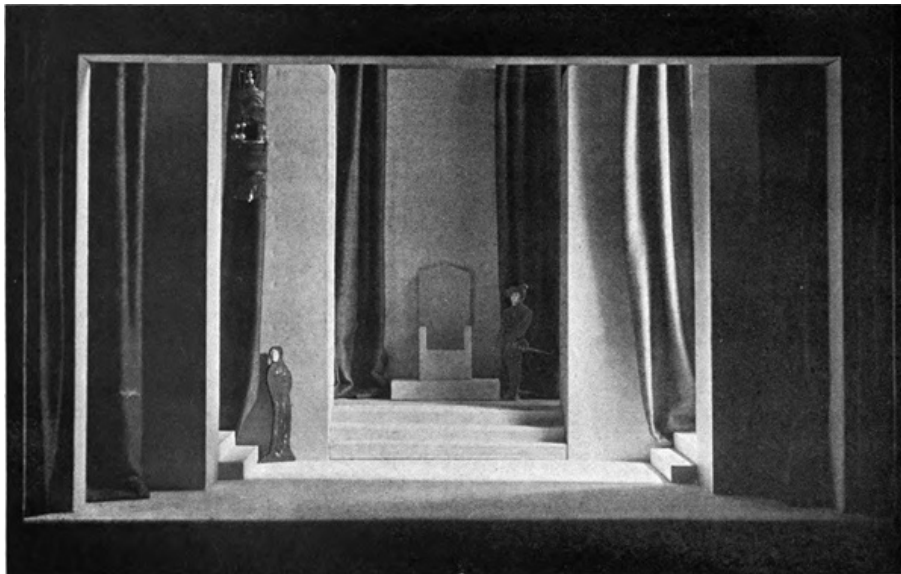
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*** START OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK HOW TO PRODUCE AMATEUR PLAYS: A PRACTICAL MANUAL ***

HOW TO PRODUCE AMATEUR PLAYS



**SETTING FOR A POETIC DRAMA. BY SAM HUME.
(Courtesy of the artist).**

HOW TO PRODUCE AMATEUR PLAYS

A Practical Manual

BY

BARRETT H. CLARK

NEW AND REVISED EDITION



BOSTON
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1923

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PREFACE TO THE REVISED EDITION

THIS book aims to supply the demand for a simple guide to the production of plays by amateurs. During the past decade a number of books dealing with the subject have been published, but these are concerned either with theoretical and educational, or else with limited and, from the practical viewpoint, unessential aspects of the question. In the present manual the author has attempted an altogether practical work, which may be used by those who have little or no knowledge of

producing plays.

The book is not altogether limited in its appeal merely to producers; actors themselves and others having to do with amateur producing will find it helpful. The author has added a number of suggestions on a matter which is rapidly becoming of prime importance: the construction of stages and setting, and the manipulation of lighting.

It is always well to bear in mind that no art can be taught by means of books. The chief purpose of this volume is to lay down the elements and outline the technique of amateur producing.

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A careful study of it will enable the amateur stage manager to do much for himself which has heretofore been either impossible or attended with dire difficulty.

The plan of the book is simple: each question and problem is treated in its natural order, from the moment an organization decides to "give a play", until the curtain drops on the last performance of it.

This new edition of "How to Produce Amateur Plays" has been revised throughout, and the list of plays in Chapter X completely re-written and brought up to date.

The author acknowledges his indebtedness for suggestions and help, as well as for permission to reproduce diagrams, photographs, and passages from plays, to Mr. T. R. Edwards, Mr. Hiram Kelly Moderwell, Mr. L. R. Lewis, Mr. Clayton Hamilton, Miss Grace Griswold, Miss Edith Wynne Matthison, Mr. Maurice Browne, Miss Ida Treat, Mr. Sam Hume, John Lane Company, Samuel French, Brentano's, and Henry Holt and Company.

MARCH, 1922

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HOW TO PRODUCE AMATEUR PLAYS

[pg 1]

CHAPTER I

CHOOSING THE PLAY

THE first important question arising after the decision to give a play, is "What play?" Only too often is this question answered in a haphazard way. Of recent years a large number of guides to selecting plays have made their appearance, most of which are incomplete and otherwise unsatisfactory. The large lists issued by play publishers are bewildering. Toward the end of the present volume is a selective list of plays, all of which are, in one way or another, "worth while"; but as conditions differ so widely, it is practically impossible to do otherwise than merely indicate in a general way what sort of play is suggested.

Each play considered by any organization should be read by the director or even the whole club or cast, after the requisite conditions have been considered. These conditions usually are:

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1. **Size of the Cast.** This is obviously a simple matter: a cast of ten cannot play Shakespeare.

2. **Ability of the Cast.** This is a little more difficult. While it is a laudable ambition to produce Ibsen, let us say, no high-school students are sufficiently mature or skilled to produce "A Doll's House." As a rule, the well-known classics—Shakespeare, Molière, Goldoni, Sheridan, Goldsmith—suffer much less from inadequate acting and production than do modern dramatists. The opinion of an expert, or at least of some one who has had experience in coaching amateur plays, should be sought and acted upon. If, for example, "As You Like It" is under consideration, it must be borne in

mind that the rôle of Rosalind requires delicate and subtle acting, and if no suitable woman can be found for that part, a simpler play, like "The Comedy of Errors", had much better be substituted. Modern plays are on the whole more difficult: the portrayal of a modern character calls for greater variety, maturity, and skill than the average amateur possesses. The characters in Molière's "Le Bourgeois Gentilhomme" ("The Merchant Gentleman"), Shakespeare's "The Comedy of Errors", Sheridan's "The Rivals", are more or less well-known types, and acting of a conventional and imitative kind is better suited to them. On the other hand, only the best-trained amateurs are able to impart the needful appearance of life and actuality to a play like Henry Arthur Jones's "The Liars." Still, there are many modern plays—among them, Shaw's "You Never Can Tell" and Wilde's "The Importance of Being Earnest"—in which no great subtlety of characterization is called for. These can be produced as easily by amateurs as can Shakespeare and Sheridan.

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3. **The Kind of Play** to be presented usually raises many questions which are entirely without the scope of purely dramatic considerations. In this country especially, there is a studied avoidance among schools and often among colleges and universities, of so-called "unpleasant plays." Without entering into the reasons for this aversion, it is rather fortunate, because as a general rule, "thesis", "sex", and "problem" plays are full of pitfalls for amateur actors and producers.

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While it is a splendid thing to believe no play too good for amateurs, some moderation is necessary where a play under consideration is obviously beyond the ability of a cast: "Hamlet" ought never to be attempted by amateurs, nor such subtle and otherwise difficult plays as "Man and Superman." Plays of the highest merit can be found which are not so taxing as these. There is no reason why Sophocles' "Electra", Euripides' "Alcestis", or the comedies of Lope de Vega, Goldoni, Molière, Kotzebue, Lessing, not to mention the better-known English classics, should not be performed by amateurs.

It goes without saying that the facile, trashy, "popular" comedies of the past two or three generations are to be avoided by amateurs who take their work seriously. This does not mean that all farces and comedies should be left out of the repertory: "The Magistrate" and "The Importance of Being Earnest" are among the finest farces in the language. The point to be impressed is that it is better to attempt a play which may be more difficult to perform than "Charley's Aunt", than to give a good performance of that oft-acted and decidedly hackneyed piece. It is much more meritorious to produce a good play poorly, if need be, than a poor play well.

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If, after having consulted the list in this volume and similar other lists, the club is still unable to decide on a suitable modern play, the best course is to return to the classics. It is likely that the plays that have pleased audiences for centuries will please us. Aristophanes' "The Clouds" and "Lysistrata", with a few necessary "cuts"; Plautus' "The Twins" and Terence's "Phormio"; Goldoni's "The Fan"; Shakespeare's "Comedy of Errors" and half a dozen other comedies; Molière's "Merchant Gentleman" and "Doctor in Spite of Himself"; Sheridan's "The Rivals" and Goldsmith's "She Stoops to Conquer"; Lessing's "Minna von Barnhelm"—almost any one of these is "safe." A classic can never be seen too often and, since true amateurs are those who play for the joy of playing, they will receive ample recompense for their efforts in the thought that they have at least added their mite to the sum total of true enjoyment in the theater. Another argument in favor of the performance of the classics is that they are rarely produced by professionals. If an amateur club revives a classic, especially one which is not often seen nowadays, it may well be proud of its efforts.

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If, however, the club insists on giving a modern play, it will have little difficulty in finding suitable material. It is well not to challenge comparison with professional productions by choosing plays which have had professional runs of late; try rather to select (1) good modern plays which by reason of their subject matter, form, etc., cannot under present conditions be commercially successful (like Granville Barker's "The Marrying of Ann Leete"); (2) translations of contemporary foreign plays which are not well known either to American readers or producers; and, finally (3) original plays. Here it is difficult to advise. It cannot be hoped that an amateur club will discover many masterpieces among original plays submitted to it, but if any of the works considered has even a touch of originality, some good characterization, any marked technical skill; in a word, if there is something interesting or promising, then it is worth producing. Doubtless many beginners are discouraged from writing plays for lack of experience gained by seeing their work staged; for such, the amateur club is the only resource.

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Besides these particular considerations, there remain the minor but necessary points relating to rights and royalties. A full statement of the legal aspect of the case is to be found in the first appendix in this book.



**"THE GROTESQUES", BY CLOYD HEAD. PRODUCED AT THE
LITTLE THEATER, CHICAGO**

A shallow cyclorama. The simple design forms an effective background for the grouping of the figures.

(Courtesy of Maurice Browne).

CHAPTER II

ORGANIZATION

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A GREAT many more factors go into the making of a successful dramatic production than may at first be apparent. To organize a staff whose duty it is to furnish and equip a theater, hall, or schoolroom; to arrange and efficiently run rehearsals; to supply "props", costumes, and furniture; to manage the stage during the performance—all this is next in importance to the acting itself.

Of late years especially it has been made clear that the art of the theater, although it is a collaboration of the brains and hands of many persons, must be under the supervision of one dominating and far-seeing chief. That is to say, one person and one alone must be responsible for the entire production. Except in rare instances this head cannot know of and attend to each detail himself, but it is his business to see that the whole organization is formed and managed according to his wishes. The function of this ideal manager has been compared with that of the orchestral conductor: it is he who leads, and he should be the first to detect the slightest discord. While the foregoing remarks are more strictly applicable to acting and staging, it will readily be seen that if the same leader is not in touch with the more practical side of the production, there is likely to arise that working at cross-purposes which has ruined many an amateur as well as professional production. While a great deal of the actual work must be done by subordinates, it should be clearly understood that the director has the final word of authority.

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Much in the matter of organization depends upon the number and ability and experience of those persons who are available, but the suggestions about to be made as to the organization of a staff are based upon the assumption that the director is a capable person, and his assistants at least willing to learn from him. As a rule, he will have plenty of material to work with.

The Director. The producer, the head under whose guidance the entire work of rehearsing and organization should lie, is called the director. However, since this position is often held by a hired coach or by some one else who cannot be expected to attend to much outside the actual rehearsing, there must be elected or appointed an officer who is directly responsible. This officer is:

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The Stage Manager. As the director cannot always be present at every rehearsal, and as oftentimes two parts of the play are rehearsed simultaneously, it is evident that another director

must be ready to act in place of the head. It is chiefly his duty to "hold" the prompt-book and keep a careful record of all stage business, "cuts", etc. At every rehearsal he must be ready to prompt, either lines or "business"—action, gestures, crosses, entrances, exits, and the like—and call the attention of the director to omissions or mistakes of every sort. In the event of the director's absence, he becomes the pro tem. director himself.

It is advisable—though not always possible—to delegate the duties of property man, lightman, curtain man, costume man (or wardrobe mistress) to different persons; but even when this is done, it is better for the stage manager to keep a record of all "property plots", "light plots", "furniture plots", etc.

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It is also the stage manager's business to arrange the time and place of rehearsals, and hold each actor responsible for attendance.

On the occasion of the dress rehearsal and of the actual production, it is the stage manager, and not the director, who supervises everything. His position is that of commander-in-chief. He either holds the book, or is at least close by the person who actually follows the lines; sees that each actor is ready for his entrance; that the curtain rises and falls when it should; that his assistants are each in their respective places; and that the entire performance "goes" as it is intended to go.

The Business Manager. This person attends to such matters as renting the theater—or arranging some place for the performance—printing and distributing tickets; in short, everything connected with the receipt and expenditure of money. It is not of course imperative that he should have much to do with the director; the only point to be borne in mind being that every one connected with the production of a play should be in touch with those in authority. The business manager ought to have at least a preliminary conference with the director, and report to him every week until a few days before the performance, when he should be within instant call in case of emergency. The property, light, furniture, and costume people must naturally keep in close touch with him, although no purchases should be made without the permission of the director, who in this case must be at one with the club or organization.

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The Property Man. The duties attaching to this position are definitely and necessarily limited, but of great importance. Working under the stage manager, he supplies all the objects—such as revolvers, swords, letters, etc.—in a word, everything actually *used* by the actors, and not falling under the categories of "scenery", "costumes", and "furniture."

It will be found necessary in some cases to add to the staff one person whose business it is to attend to the matter of furnishings: rugs, hangings, pictures, furniture, and so forth; but in case there is no such person, the property man attends to these details himself.

It cannot be too strongly urged that from the very first as many "props", as much furniture or as many set pieces as possible (depending on whether the set is an indoor or outdoor one), should be used by the actors. In this way they will be better able to associate their thoughts, words, and gestures with the material objects with which they will be surrounded on the fatal night. If this is impracticable, that is, if most of these objects cannot be secured from the first, then at least suitable substitutes should be used. The presence of such fundamentally important articles as the wall in Rostand's "The Romancers", and the dentist's chair in Shaw's "You Never Can Tell", when used from the first rehearsals, always minimizes the danger of confusion of lines or business at the last moment.

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The property man must keep a list of everything required; this should be a duplicate of that in the possession of the stage manager.

The Lightman. Sometimes even nowadays called the "Gasman." He is not indispensable, because almost always the regular electrician attends to the switchboard. However, some one should be with the electrician at the dress rehearsal and on the evening of the performance to give him the necessary light cues. Usually, however, the stage manager who holds the prompt-book where all the light cues are indicated can fulfill this function.

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The Costume Man (or Wardrobe Mistress, as the case may be). Again the duties are simple. If the play is a classic—Shakespeare, for instance,—the costumes, in ninety-nine cases out of a hundred, had better be rented from a regular costumer. The costume man, then, together with the business manager, attends to the details of renting, and sees that all costumes are ready for the dress rehearsal. If the costumes are made to order, the matter is supervised by the costume man. But, as with everything else connected with the best amateur efforts, there should be some expert adviser, not so much one versed in history and archeology as an artist with an eye for color and style. The director in any event must be consulted, so that lights, scenery, and costumes may harmonize. Details as to costumes are to be found in many books, and need not here be discussed. In spite of a good deal that has been written to the contrary, historical accuracy is not of vast importance: so long as there are no glaring anachronisms, Shakespeare may be presented with actors wearing pre- or post-Elizabethan costumes, provided they are beautiful, and harmonize.

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Among the thousand and one minor details of producing, there are some which in large productions might be assigned to specially appointed individuals, but most of the duties to be briefly enumerated below may easily be given over to the stage manager, property man, or costume man, or even to the lightman.

Handling and Setting of Scenery and Furniture. This is usually taken care of by the property man and his assistants, under the direction of the stage manager. As in every other branch of the work, all details must be planned beforehand, and recorded.

Music. The music cues should be marked in the stage manager's prompt-book. Incidental music, whether it be on, behind, or off-stage in the orchestra pit, ought to be rehearsed at least two or three times. On the occasion of the performance, the stage manager gives directions from his prompt-book for all music cues.

Crowds or Large Groups. The management and rehearsing of crowds or large groups is considered under "Rehearsing" (p. 58). Here it will suffice to state that it is well to have an assistant whose duty it is to see that the "supes" [supernumeraries] are conducted on and off the stage at the right time.

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Among the further details which must be looked after are the duties which are sometimes left to the stage manager: the ringing of bells, calling of actors at the regular performance, etc. A "call boy" may be delegated to do this.

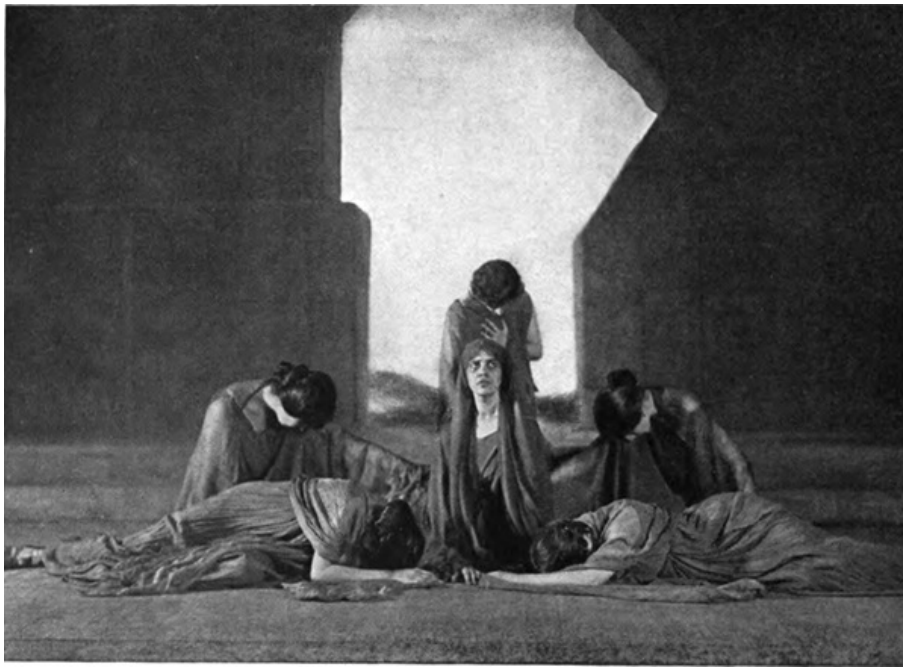
Understudies. Trouble is always likely to arise, especially among amateurs, because there is no effective method of holding the actors to strict account. Often, one or more of the cast finds, or thinks he finds, good reason for leaving it, and a new actor must sometimes be found and trained to fill the vacancy on perilously short notice. Sickness or indisposition invariably give rise to the same problem. If possible, an entire second cast should be trained, so that any member of it could at a moment's notice be called upon to play in the first cast. While this second company should be letter-perfect and know the "business" in every detail, it is not necessary that their acting be so finished and detailed as that of the others. Understudy rehearsals are under the direction of the stage manager, although the director should witness at least two or three.

Since the performance depends almost wholly on the knowledge, sympathy, and taste of the director, the greatest care should be taken in choosing him. Needless to say, the ideal director does not exist; still, his attributes should be constantly borne in mind. If he lacks the artist's sense of color, rhythm, and proportion, then an art adviser must be called in to suggest color schemes as regards costumes, scenery, furniture, and lighting. Nowadays, great attention is being paid to these matters, and the subtle effect of background and detail is much greater than is commonly supposed. The play is of first importance—that must never be forgotten—but these other matters are too often neglected.

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Similarly with costumes, music, scenery, it is never amiss to consult authorities. But once more be it repeated, the whole production should bear the imprint of the director's personality, because only in this way can we hope for that essential unity of effect which is a basic principle of all art.

Coöperation with, but, in the last analysis, subserviency to, the director, is the keynote of success.



**"THE TROJAN WOMEN", OF EURIPIDES. PRODUCED AT THE
LITTLE THEATER, CHICAGO.**

Effective grouping against a simple background. (Courtesy of Maurice Browne).

CHAPTER III

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CHOOSING THE CAST

OBVIOUSLY, the choice of the cast should depend upon the ability of the actors, although in the case of an organization like a school or college dramatic club, this system is not always practicable or even advisable. Every member of such a club should be trained to work for a common end, and a system by which amateurs are made to understand the necessity of assuming first small and unimportant rôles and working up gradually to the greater and more important ones, makes for harmony and completeness of effect in performances. It should be one of the chief ends of amateur producing to get away from the curse of the professional stage: the star system. It has been stated here that the greatest emphasis must be laid on the play itself, and no actor, professional or amateur, should ever labor under the delusion that he is of greater or even as great importance as the play in which he strives to act his part. The average actor is inclined to judge a play's merit according to the sort of part it furnishes him; the amateur spirit has done much to do away with this attitude, and it is to be hoped that no coach will ever do otherwise than discourage it.

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Competition as a means of selecting a cast is in most cases the best method. The play once selected, the people from among whom the cast is to be formed are assembled. It is a good plan to have every one read the play first, and make a study of at least one scene of it. Then, either alone or in company with one, two, or three others, he reads—or recites from memory—the scene in question, either before the entire club or before a committee of judges. Each actor is judged on appearance, ease, voice, and insight into the character he is portraying. The judges, seconded possibly by the members of the club (whose votes should, by the way, be of only secondary importance), then select those whom they consider best fitted for the parts. In every case the director should give final sanction to the selection.

In cases where members must at first assume only minor parts because of club rules, there may arise some difficulty: for example, a beginner may be better fitted to assume an important rôle than older club members. Such cases must of course be dealt with individually.

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In organizations which are not run on so democratic a basis, the director selects the cast himself. On the whole, this is much the best system, as the director is left a free field in which to work out his own problems in his own way. If it is at all possible, an amateur club ought to put everything, including the responsibility, into the hands of a competent director. In this respect, the despotism of the professional stage is most beneficial. Whether the coach be an outsider hired for the occasion, or a regular member of the club, in nine cases out of ten he will establish and

maintain harmony, allow no real talent to languish, and be at least in a position to produce definite artistic results. Amateur management has spoiled much good material. A director with full authority can work more easily and efficiently if left to his own devices than if trammelled with rules and regulations.

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The theater, behind the scenes, is a despotic institution; it must be, but the greatest care must be taken in choosing the right despot. Should the coach be a professional manager or actor, or should he be an amateur? The question is a difficult one. There are, it goes without saying, many excellent directors who are or have been professionals; on the other hand, it cannot be denied that some of the best amateur work in this country has been done by directors whose experience on the professional stage has, to say the least, been limited. Some such training is beneficial, but to put a professional of many years' experience in charge of amateurs is likely to make of the amateurs a company of puppets imitating only some of the externals of professionaldom. The best director, therefore, seems to be a person who has some professional experience, but who has likewise dealt with amateurs; one who enters into the amateur spirit, and understands its difference from the professional world, and does not try to train his company to imitate stock actors or "stars."

Understudies may be chosen in the same manner as the first cast.

After the choosing of the casts, the next step is rehearsing. To this complicated process the next three chapters are devoted.



"CAPTAIN BRASSBOUND'S CONVERSION", BY SHAW. SET OF ACT I, AS PRODUCED BY THE NEIGHBORHOOD PLAYHOUSE, NEW YORK.

(Photo by White. Courtesy of Neighborhood Playhouse).

CHAPTER IV

REHEARSING

I

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THE first rehearsal should be "called" as soon as possible after the cast has been selected and a place chosen in which to work. If the play is to be performed in a regular theater, it is wise to block out the general action and have at least the first two or three rehearsals on the stage. It would be still better if all the rehearsals could be conducted there, but as this is seldom possible, the stage manager should take its dimensions and secure some room as near the size of the stage as he can find. A room too large or too small, or not the requisite shape, is more than likely to confuse the

actors. As many of the essential "props" and articles of furniture as possible should be used from the very first, in order to accustom the actors to work under approximately the same conditions as on the occasion of the performance.

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If the play can be secured in printed form, each actor will have his copy, and a general reading to the cast by the director or stage manager be rendered unnecessary. However, a few remarks by him as to the nature and spirit of the play will not be amiss. It is not uncommon to hear of professionals who have never read or seen the entire play even after acting in it for many months. Unless each actor knows and feels what the play is about and enters into its spirit, there can be little chance for unity and harmony.

"Cutting", or other alteration, is often necessary. The director should read his alterations and allow each actor to make his text conform with the prompt-copy.

When the play is not obtainable in book form, each rôle is then copied from the manuscript, together with the "cues" and all the stage business. In this case, a general reading to the cast is imperative.

The preliminaries disposed of, the play is *read*, each actor taking his part. This is merely to familiarize the actors with the play and show them briefly their relation to each other and the work as a whole. At this first rehearsal, there should be no attempt at acting; that is reserved for the next meeting.

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At the second rehearsal^[1]—which should take place the day after the first—the director blocks out the action. If the play be a full-length one (approximately two hours) then one act of this general blocking out will be found to occupy all the time. If the play is in a single act, and provided it be not too long, then the entire play may be blocked out.

[1] The system here followed must of necessity be arbitrary, but the principle is easy to grasp. A great deal depends on the ability of the actors and the time they can afford.

What is "blocking out"? Let us take an easy example and block out the first few minutes' of Wilde's "The Importance of Being Earnest."^[2] Here follows the text of the first two and a half pages:

[2] Editions published by French, Putnam, Luce, Nichols, and Baker.

Scene—Morning-room in Algernon's flat in Half Moon Street. The room is luxuriously and artistically furnished. The sound of a piano is heard in the adjoining room.

[LANE *is arranging afternoon tea on the table, and after the music has ceased, ALGERNON enters.*]

ALGERNON. Did you hear what I was playing, Lane?

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LANE. I didn't think it polite to listen, sir.

ALGERNON. I'm sorry for that, for your sake. I don't play accurately—any one can play accurately—but I play with wonderful expression. As far as the piano is concerned, sentiment is my forte. I keep science for Life.

LANE. Yes, sir.

ALGERNON. And, speaking of the science of Life, have you got the cucumber sandwiches cut for Lady Bracknell?

LANE. Yes, sir. [*He hands them on a salver.*]

ALGERNON. [*Inspects them, takes two, and sits down on the sofa.*] Oh! ... by the way, Lane, I see from your book that on Thursday night, when Lord Shoreman and Mr. Worthing were dining with me, eight bottles of champagne are entered as having been consumed.

LANE. Yes, sir, eight bottles and a pint.

ALGERNON. Why is it that at a bachelor's establishment the servants invariably drink the champagne? I ask merely for information.

LANE. I attribute it to the superior quality of the wine, sir. I have often observed that in married households the champagne is rarely of a first-rate brand.

ALGERNON. Good Heavens! Is marriage so demoralizing as that?

LANE. I believe it *is* a very pleasant state, sir. I have had very little experience of it myself up to the present. I have only been married once. That was in consequence of a misunderstanding between myself and a young person.

ALGERNON. [*Languidly.*] I don't know that I am much interested in your family life, Lane.

LANE. No, sir; it is not a very interesting subject. I never think of it myself.

ALGERNON. Very natural, I am sure. That will do, Lane, thank you.

LANE. Thank you, sir. [LANE *goes out.*]

ALGERNON. Lane's views on marriage seem somewhat lax. Really, if the lower orders don't set us a good example, what on earth is the use of them? They seem, as a class, to have absolutely no sense of moral responsibility. [*Enter* LANE.]

LANE. Mr. Ernest Worthing. [*Enter* JACK. LANE *goes out.*]

ALGERNON. How are you, my dear Ernest? What brings you up to town?

JACK. Oh, pleasure, pleasure! What else should bring me anywhere? Eating as usual, I see, Algy?

ALGERNON. [*Stiffly.*] I believe it is customary in good society to take some slight refreshment at five o'clock. Where have you been since last Thursday?

JACK. [*Sitting down on the sofa.*] In the country.

ALGERNON. What on earth do you do there?

JACK. [*Pulling off his gloves.*] When one is in town one amuses oneself. When one is in the country one amuses other people. It is excessively boring.

ALGERNON. And who are the people you amuse?

JACK. [*Airily.*] Oh, neighbors, neighbors.

ALGERNON. Got nice neighbors in your part of Shropshire?

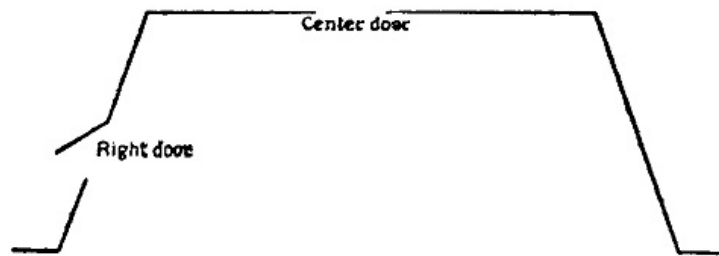
JACK. Perfectly horrid! Never speak to one of them.

ALGERNON. How immensely you must amuse them! (*Goes over and takes sandwich.*) By the way, Shropshire is your county, is it not?

JACK. Eh? Shropshire? Yes, of course. Hallo! Why all these cups? Why such extravagance in one so young? Who is coming to tea?

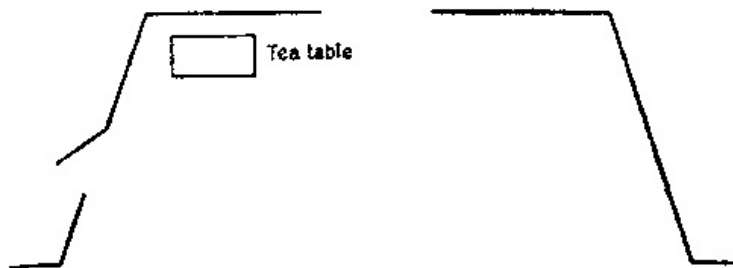
The first point to be noticed is that the stage directions are not sufficient. To begin with, the only information we have as to the morning-room is that it is in Algernon Moncrieff's flat in Half Moon Street, and that it is "*luxuriously and artistically furnished.*" The next directions—"LANE *is arranging tea on a table*"—prove that there *is* a tea-table with tea things on it. We are therefore dependent on the ensuing dialogue and the implied or briefly described action to furnish clues as to the entrances, furniture, and "props" which will be required in the course of the act. It is, of course, the director's and the stage manager's business to go through the play beforehand, and have all these points well in mind. Let us now see how this is done, and proceed to block out the first part of the play.

The room evidently at least has two doors: one leading into the hallway—up-stage Center—the other halfway down-stage Right,^[3] let us say for the present, as in the diagram:



[3] Right and Left in stage directions mean from the actors' point of view. Up-stage and down-stage mean respectively away from and toward the footlights.

Before Algernon's entrance, Lane, the butler, is preparing tea. Where is the table? Some subsequent business may necessitate its being in a position different from the one first chosen, but let us assume that it is up-stage to the right:

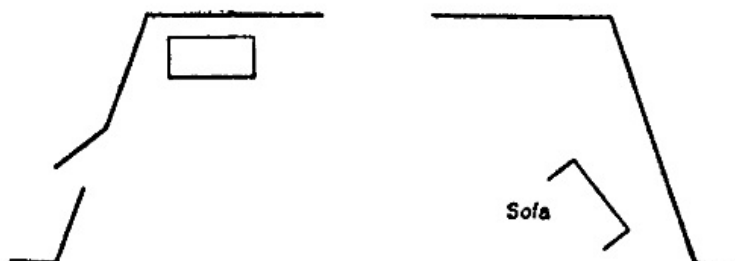


There it is not likely to be in the way of the actors; furthermore, it is not on the same side of the stage as the sofa—which is the next article of furniture to be placed. If the table and the sofa and the door were all on the same side of the stage, it would be much too crowded, especially as the larger part of the subsequent action revolves about them.

Lane, then, is busied with the tea things for a moment, as and after the curtain rises. Then the music of a piano is heard off-stage to the right. It stops, and a moment later Algernon enters. As he evidently has nothing in particular to do at that moment, he may stand at the center of the stage, facing Lane, who stops his work and respectfully answers his master's questions. When Algernon says: "And, speaking of the science of Life, have you got the cucumber sandwiches cut for Lady Bracknell?", what more natural than that he should look in the direction of the table, and perhaps even make a step toward it? Lane then goes to the table, takes up the salver with the sandwiches on it, and hands it to Algernon. Here there are no other directions than "*Hands them on salver.*" The other "business" is inferred from the dialogue. Algernon then "*Inspects them, takes two, and sits down on the sofa.*"

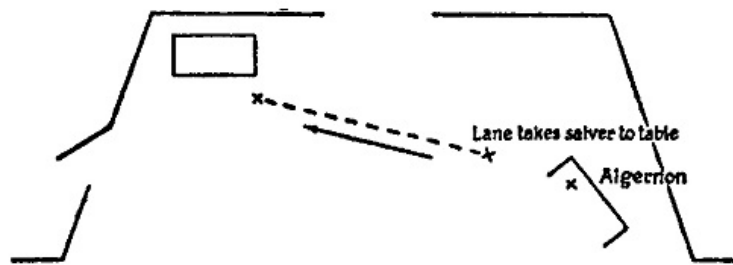
[pg 30

This is the first reference to the sofa. The original prompt-copy must, of course, have made clear exactly where each article of furniture stood, but, for the reasons above enumerated, let us place the sofa as in the diagram:



[pg 31

Notice now that nothing is said of the salver. But from the direction near the top of page 3—(Luce and Baker editions) "*Goes over and takes sandwich*"—we may assume that Lane takes the salver back to the table. Undoubtedly, he does this as Algernon sits on the sofa. This stage direction should be indicated in the prompt-copy, as well as in that of the actor playing Lane, as follows:



As soon as Lane has done this, or even before, Algernon resumes his conversation, while Lane turns and listens to him. Lane stands somewhere between the table and the sofa, at a respectful distance from Algernon. The next "business" occurs when Algernon says "That will do, Lane, thank you", and Lane replies "Thank you, sir", and goes out. This brings up another question which is not answered, as yet at least, in the text. Does Lane go out Right? Possibly; or is there another entrance Left, leading to the butler's room? So far as we are able to determine, there is no good reason why the room to the right, where Algernon was playing, should not lead to the butler's room, or to wherever he is supposed to go. And in this case, there is no reason why Lane cannot, during Algernon's soliloquy, have heard the doorbell ring, answered it, and been ready to reënter, announcing, as he does: "Mr. Ernest Worthing." Jack then enters, Right. Although again there is no stage direction, it is likely that Algernon rises to greet his friend and shake hands with him.

[pg 32]

Once more, the stage directions, or rather the want of them, are apt to confuse. On the top of page 3, we read that Jack pulls "off his gloves." He wears a hat, of course, and probably a coat. He carries his hat in his hand, but presumably still wears his coat, and certainly his gloves. Lane, before he leaves, would undoubtedly take Jack's hat, help him off with his coat, and take them out with him. Then, before the two men shake hands—if they do—Jack pulls off his gloves. Jack's line, "Eating as usual, I see, Algy," is sufficient indication to prove that in one hand Algernon holds a sandwich. Algernon then sits down. The dramatist would surely have mentioned Jack's sitting down if that had been his intention; therefore Jack may stand. Now comes the direction about Jack's "Pulling off his gloves." What does he do with them? For the present, at least, let us allow him to go to the tea table, and lay them on it. A moment later, Algernon "Goes over and takes sandwich." He stands by the table, eating, and this attracts Jack's attention to the somewhat elaborate preparations for tea. Algernon then says: "By the way, Shropshire is your county, is it not?" But Jack, too engrossed in the preparations, scarcely hears the other, and answers: "Eh? Shropshire? Yes, of course," and so on. Then he evidently goes to the tea table.

[pg 33]

This is the general method of attack to be pursued. It may be that later in the same scene it will be necessary to go back and undo some of the "business", because the only available text of this play—and this is almost always true of printed plays—is not in prompt-copy form. The making, therefore, of a prompt-copy is a slow process. First, the director goes through the play and plans in a general way what the action is to be, but only by rehearsing his cast on a particular stage and under specific conditions, is he able to know every detail of the action. By the time the actors are letter-perfect, the prompt-copy ought likewise to be fairly perfect. It is always dangerous to change "business" after the actors have memorized their parts.

[pg 34]

During this preliminary blocking-out process, little or no attention need be paid to details: the mere outlining of the action, together with the reading of the lines by the actors, is sufficient.

Sometimes printed plays suffer from too many stage directions, and occasionally even the careful Bernard Shaw, as the following extract will prove, is far from clear. Here are the opening pages of "You Never Can Tell":^[4]

[4] Published separately by Brentano's.

In a dentist's operating room on a fine August morning in 1896. Not the usual tiny London den, but the best sitting-room of a furnished lodging in a terrace on the sea front at a fashionable watering place. The operating chair, with a gas pump and cylinder beside it, is half way between the center of the room and one of the corners. If you look into the room through the window which lights it, you will see the fireplace in the middle of the wall opposite you, with the door beside it to your left; an M.R.C.S. diploma in a frame hung on the chimney-piece; an easy chair covered in black leather on the hearth; a neat stool and bench, with vice, tools, and a mortar and pestle in the corner to the right. Near this bench stands a slender machine like a whip provided with a stand, a pedal, and an exaggerated winch. Recognizing this as a dental drill, you shudder and look away to your left, where you can see another window, underneath which stands a writing table, with a blotter and a diary on it, and a chair. Next the writing table, towards the door, is a leather covered sofa. The opposite wall, close on your right, is occupied mostly by a bookcase. The operating chair is under your nose, facing you, with the cabinet of

[pg 35]

instruments handy to it on your left. You observe that the professional furniture and apparatus are new, and that the wall paper, designed, with the taste of an undertaker, in festoons and urns, the carpet with its symmetrical plans of rich, cabbage nosegays, the glass gasalier with lustres, the ornamental, gilt-rimmed blue candlesticks on the ends of the mantelshelf, also glass-draped with lustres, and the ormolu clock under a glass cover in the middle between them, its uselessness emphasized by a cheap American clock disrespectfully placed beside it and now indicating 12 o'clock noon, all combine with the black marble which gives the fireplace the air of a miniature family vault, to suggest early Victorian commercial respectability, belief in money, Bible fetichism, fear of hell always at war with fear of poverty, instinctive horror of the passionate character of art, love and the Roman Catholic religion, and all the first fruits of plutocracy in the early generations of the industrial revolution.

There is no shadow of this on the two persons who are occupying the room just now. One of them, a very pretty woman in miniature, her tiny figure dressed with the daintiest gaiety, is of a later generation, being hardly eighteen yet. This darling little creature clearly does not belong to the room, or even to the country; for her complexion, though very delicate, has been burnt biscuit color by some warmer sun than England's; and yet there is, for a very subtle observer, a link between them. For she has a glass of water in her hand, and a rapidly clearing cloud of spartan obstinacy on her tiny firm mouth and quaintly squared eyebrows. If the least line of conscience could be traced between those eyebrows, an Evangelical might cherish some faint hope of finding her a sheep in wolf's clothing—for her frock is recklessly pretty—but as the cloud vanishes it leaves her frontal sinus as smoothly free from conviction of sin as a kitten's.

The dentist, contemplating her with the self-satisfaction of a successful operator, is a young man of thirty or thereabouts. He does not give the impression of being much of a workman: his professional manner evidently strikes him as being a joke; and it is underlain by a thoughtless pleasantry which betrays the young gentleman still unsettled and in search of amusing adventures, behind the newly set-up dentist in search of patients. He is not without gravity of demeanor; but the strained nostrils stamp it as the gravity of the humorist. His eyes are clear, alert, of sceptically moderate size, and yet a little rash; his forehead is an excellent one, with plenty of room behind it; his nose and chin cavalierly handsome. On the whole, an attractive, noticeable beginner, of whose prospects a man of business might form a tolerably favorable estimate.

THE YOUNG LADY (*handing him the glass*). Thank you. (*In spite of the biscuit complexion she has not the slightest foreign accent.*)

THE DENTIST (*putting it down on the ledge of his cabinet of instruments*). That was my first tooth.

THE YOUNG LADY (*aghast*). Your first! Do you mean to say that you began practising on me?

THE DENTIST. Every dentist has to begin on somebody.

THE YOUNG LADY. Yes: somebody in a hospital, not people who pay.

THE DENTIST (*laughing*). Oh, the hospital doesn't count. I only meant my first tooth in private practice. Why didn't you let me give you gas?

THE YOUNG LADY. Because you said it would be five shillings extra.

THE DENTIST (*shocked*). Oh, don't say that. It makes me feel as if I had hurt you for the sake of five shillings.

THE YOUNG LADY (*with cool insolence*). Well, so you have! (*She gets up.*) Why shouldn't you? it's your business to hurt people. (*It amuses him to be treated in this fashion; he chuckles secretly as he proceeds to clean and replace his instruments. She shakes her dress into order, looks inquisitively about her; and goes to the window.*) You have a good view of the sea from these rooms! Are they expensive?

THE DENTIST. Yes.

THE YOUNG LADY. You don't own the whole house, do you?

THE DENTIST. No.

THE YOUNG LADY (*taking the chair which stands at the writing table and looking critically at it as she spins it round on one leg*). Your furniture isn't quite the latest thing, is it?

THE DENTIST. It's my landlord's.

THE YOUNG LADY. Does he own that nice comfortable Bath chair? (*pointing to the operating chair*).

THE DENTIST. No: I have that on the hire-purchase system.

THE YOUNG LADY (*disparagingly*). I thought so. (*Looking about her again in search of further conclusion.*) I suppose you haven't been here long?

THE DENTIST. Six weeks. Is there anything else you would like to know?

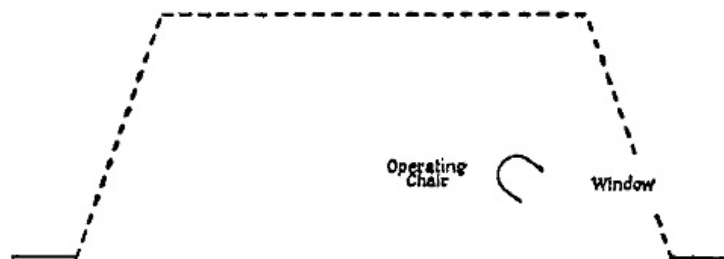
[pg 40

THE YOUNG LADY (*the hint quite lost on her*). Any family?

Shaw's stage directions here are more than sufficient: they are intended not only for the director, stage manager, property man, scene painter, and actor, but for the reader as well. His directions are always stimulating and suggestive, and should be studied by the actors; but, from the point of view of the director and stage manager, they are bewilderingly diffuse and sometimes confusing. The fact, for instance, that the action takes place precisely in 1896, can be of little interest to the manager. Nor can a clock indicate twelve o'clock "noon." In such stage directions as these the director will therefore have to separate the purely mechanical elements from the literary and atmospheric. Let us now apply ourselves to the rather difficult task of making a diagram of the stage and its settings.

It is a "fine August morning." The sun is shining out-of-doors and, as the room looks out over the sea, the stage must be lighted through one of the windows. The dramatist goes on to say that the room is "*Not the usual tiny London den, but the best sitting room of a furnished lodging.*" By inference, it is a large room. The operating chair is "*half way between the center of the room and one of the corners.*" Which corner is not designated. Let us try to plot out the stage on the assumption that we are looking at it through a window halfway down-stage on the left (the actor's left, of course). The window which lights the room is placed thus:

[pg 41

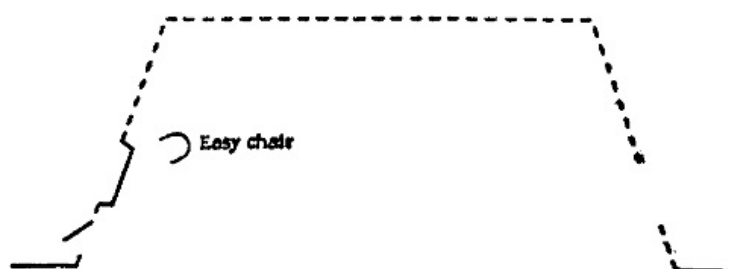


Looking through this window, "*you will see the fireplace in the middle of the wall opposite you, with the door beside it to your left*":

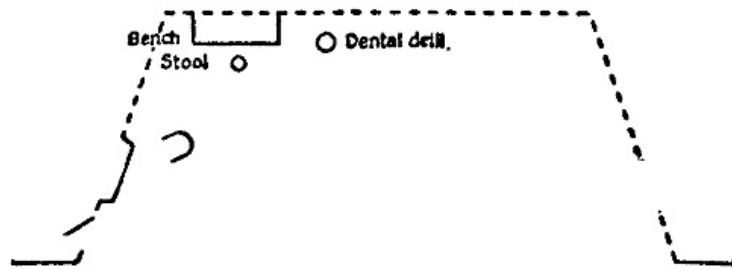


The next article of furniture mentioned is the easy chair "*on the hearth*":

[pg 42

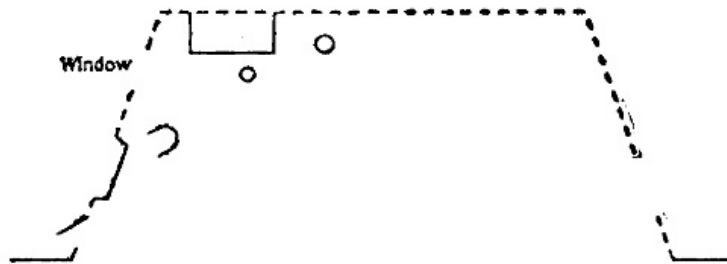


Then come "*a neat stool and bench*" and, near them, a dental drill:

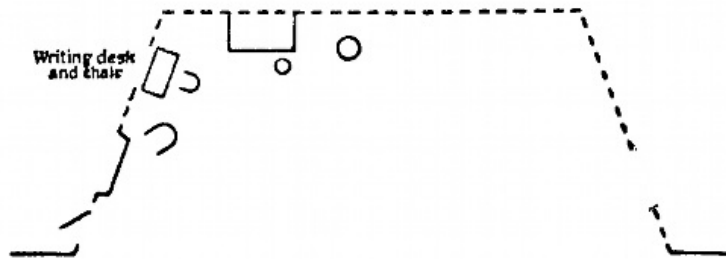


"Near it" is not definite, but for the time being, let us allow it to stand up-stage near the stool and bench, but a little toward Center. Next, you "look away to your left, where you can see another window." The direction here is not practicable, but the window may well go above the fireplace, instead of below, thus:

[pg 43

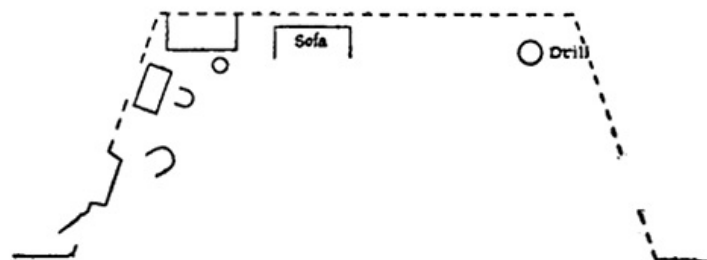


Underneath this window stands a writing table and a chair:

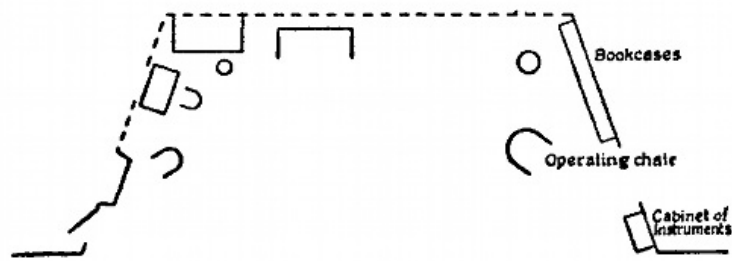


"Next the writing table, towards the door, is a leather covered sofa." To add another article of furniture to this already crowded side of the stage would not only make the room appear unnatural to the audience, but would render it impossible for the actors to move about with ease. The director will therefore have to use his ingenuity and judgment as to where to put the sofa. Some subsequent "business" may necessitate a change of the disposition of more than one chair or sofa or stool, but the process here outlined is the first step. To proceed: the sofa, then, must be placed somewhere else. But where? By moving the drill to the left, in the corner, the sofa can be placed next to the table, as follows:

[pg 44



"The opposite wall, close on your right, is occupied mostly by a bookcase. The operating chair is under your nose, facing you, with the cabinet of instruments handy to it on your left."



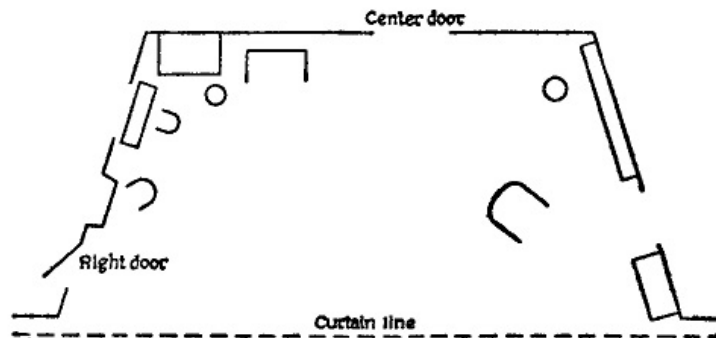
It is at once observed how necessary it was to move the drill from the other side of the room to this: over by the table, it would be out of convenient reach of the dentist.

The difficulty of arranging the stage in this case will at once prove the imperative need of going through the play with the utmost attention to stage directions and *lines*, in order to make an accurate series of stage diagrams, property, light, and furniture plots.

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Notice that in the preliminary stage directions the center entrance is not designated. It soon becomes evident, however, that a center door (or one, at least, at the back of the stage) is taken for granted.

This elementary diagram will serve as a working basis. A very little rehearsing will soon make it necessary to arrange the furniture, and so on, in a manner more pleasing to the eye and more convenient to the actor.

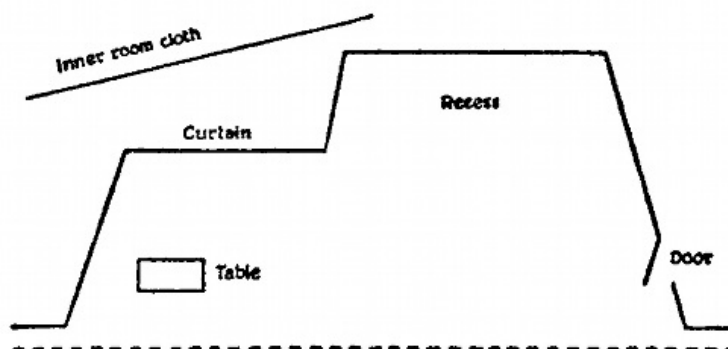


There is one more kind of text with which amateurs have to do: it is the reprint of actual prompt-copies, and is usually accurate in material details. The following extract is from the opening pages of the fourth act of Henry Arthur Jones's "The Liars" (in the special edition published by Samuel French):

[pg 46]

Scene: Drawing-room in Sir Christopher's flat in Victoria Street. L. at back is a large recess, taking up half the stage. The right half is taken up by an inner room furnished as library and smoking-room. Curtains dividing library from drawing-room. Door up-stage, L. A table down-stage, R. The room is in great confusion, with portmanteau open, clothes, etc., scattered over the floor; articles which an officer going to Central Africa might want are lying about.

The diagram, as given in the text, is this:

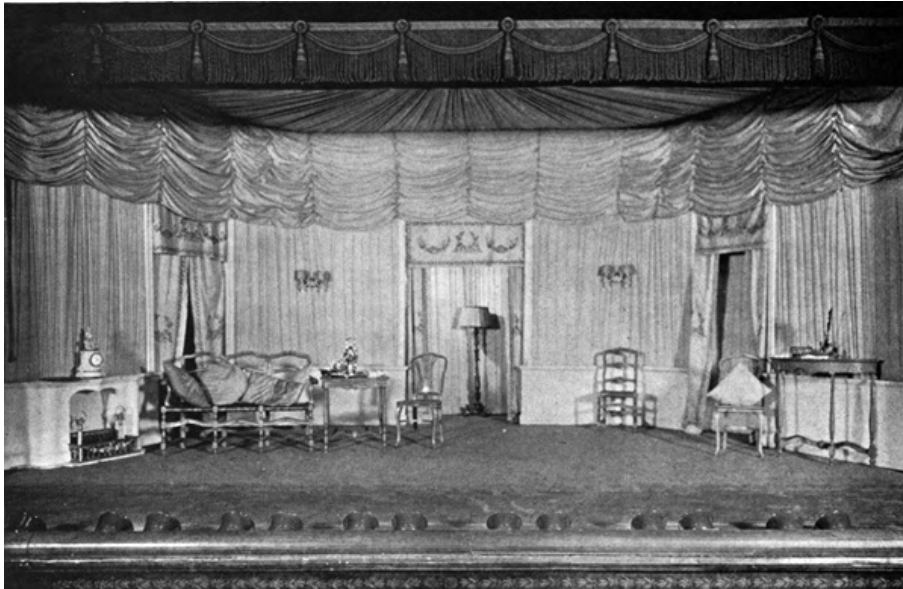


This is merely a skeleton, as it were, of a diagram, but first, the preliminary stage directions—quoted above—and the detailed and full marginal and other stage directions in the text, make clear every crossing, entrance, and exit, and designate at least the important articles of furniture and

[pg 47]

"props." For example, it is learned from the text on the first and second pages of the act, that there is a uniform case "up-Center"—up-stage, that is, in the center of it; a folding stool by the table; a trunk to the left of Center; and a sofa on the extreme left. Unlike the quotations from the Wilde and Shaw plays, those of Jones supply all necessary information to the stage manager and the actors. Of course, as always, modifications must be made to meet the exigencies of certain stages and certain actors, but these are minor matters.

The fundamental principles of this preliminary blocking-out having been laid down, we shall now proceed to a consideration of the infinitely varied problems of grouping and detailed stage business.



SET FOR MUSSET'S "WHIMS", PRODUCED BY THE WASHINGTON SQUARE PLAYERS.

(Courtesy of The Washington Square Players).

CHAPTER V

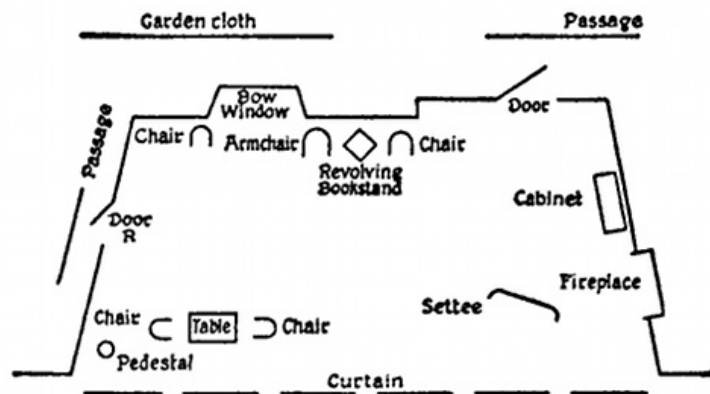
[pg 48]

REHEARSING II

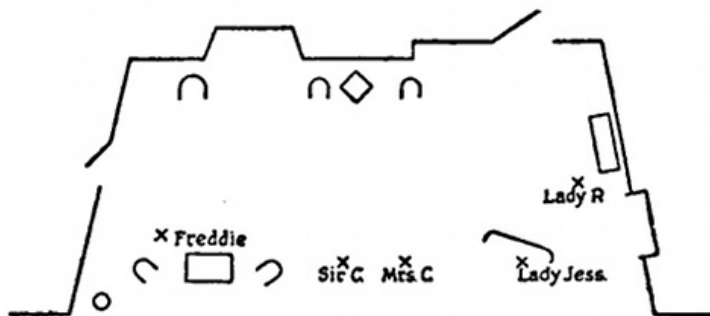
WHILE it is true that the possibilities of variation in the matter of grouping, crossing, and so on, are infinite, still there are some definite principles to be followed.

Suppose that the blocking-out process is over with, and the actors have a fair idea of their entrances, positions, business, and exits. The two following extracts (the first from the third act of Jones's "The Liars", the second from Edouard Pailleron's "The Art of Being Bored") serve to illustrate two ways of going about the problem of grouping actors on the stage. The first contains specific directions, the second only the merest suggestions. Below is the diagram of the stage in the third act of "The Liars":

[pg 49]

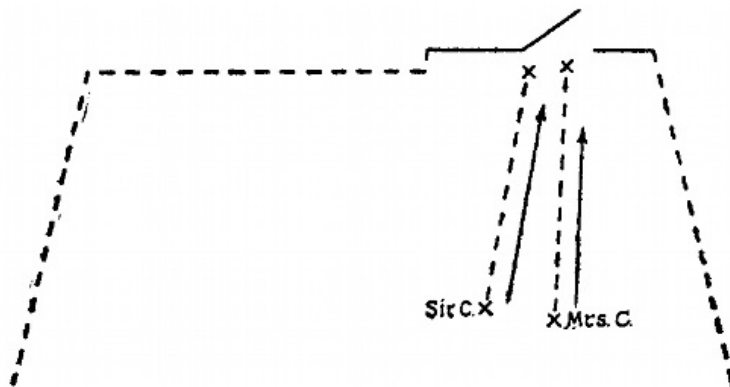


Up to page 107, which is reproduced on page 50, the characters are grouped as indicated:



Following carefully the stage directions in the text and on the margin, the action is traced as follows:

Mrs. Crespin shakes hands with Sir Christopher. Then (marginal note) "Sir C. opens door L. for Mrs. Crespin":



[pg 50

(Exit MRS. CRESPIN.^[5] They all stand looking at each other, nonplussed. SIR CHRISTOPHER slightly touching his head with perplexed gesture.)

[5] Sir C. opens door L. for Mrs. Crespin; after her exit, closes door. They all turn and look at Sir C. He sinks into a chair up C., and shakes his head at them.

SIR C.

Our fib won't do.

LADY R.

Freddie, you incomparable nincompoop!

FREDDIE.

I like that! If I hadn't asked her, what would have happened? George Nepean would have come in, you'd have plumped down on him with your lie, and what then? Don't you

think it's jolly lucky I said what I did?[6]

[6] *Lady Jess. sits L.C. Sir Chris. puts hat on bookcase C., and comes down C.*

SIR C.

It's lucky in this instance. But if I am to embark any further in these imaginative enterprises, I must ask you, Freddie, to keep a silent tongue.

FREDDIE.

What for?

SIR C.

Well, old fellow, it may be an unpalatable truth to you, but you'll never make a good liar.[7]

[7] *Lady R. and Lady Jess. agree with Sir C.*

FREDDIE.

Very likely not. But if this sort of thing is going on in my house, I think I ought to.

LADY R.[8]

[8] *Crosses to him C. Freddie sits R.C. annoyed.*

Oh, do subside, Freddie, do subside!

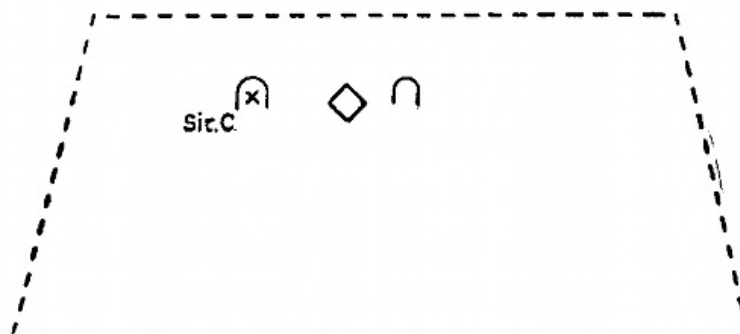
LADY J.[9]

[9] *5th call. George.*

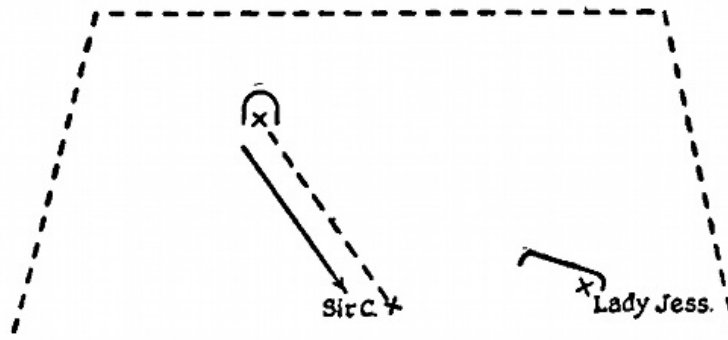
Yes, George—and perhaps Gilbert—will be here directly. Oh, will somebody tell me what to do?

Then, "after her exit, closes door. They all turn and look at Sir C. He sinks into a chair and shakes his head at them." Into which chair does he sink? Since in a moment he must put his hat on the bookcase, Center, he had better sit on the chair to the right of it:

[pg 51

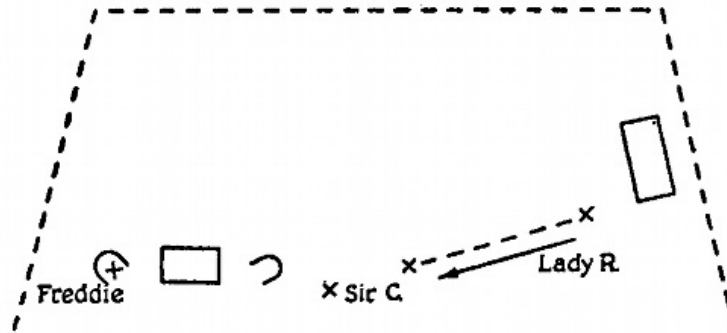


Then, at the end of Freddie's speech, "*Lady Jess. sits L.C. [left of Center]. Sir Chris. puts hat on bookcase C., and comes down C.*"



The last speech of Lady Rosamund on this page is accompanied by the following stage direction: "*Crosses to him [Sir Christopher] C. Freddie sits R.C. annoyed.*"

[pg 52]

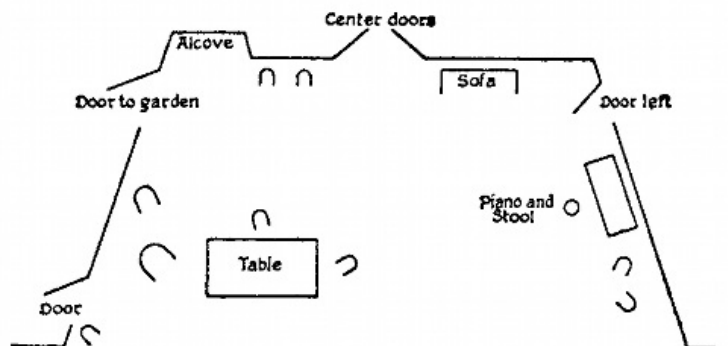


This is very simple, but only in the rarest instances are stage directions so carefully worked out and indicated. The director will usually be confronted by long pages where there are few or no definite or dependable directions. The original text of Shakespeare affords us only the most elementary explanations of stage "business", so that when Shakespeare is produced it is wisest to use one of the many stage editions, in which the traditional directions, or others equally good, are given at some length. Usually, however, the director will be aided by directions which are fairly full and fairly accurate, but never quite dependable. The following excerpt—from "The Art of Being Bored"—contains the ordinary sort of directions, the kind that are found in good plays and bad. The set is described in the first act as being:

[pg 53]

"A drawing-room, with a large entrance at the back, opening upon another room. Entrances up- and down-stage. To the left, between the two doors, a piano. Right, an entrance down-stage; farther up, a large alcove with a glazed door leading into the garden; a table, on either side of which is a chair; to the right, a small table and a sofa; arm-chairs, etc."

This may be plotted in the following manner:



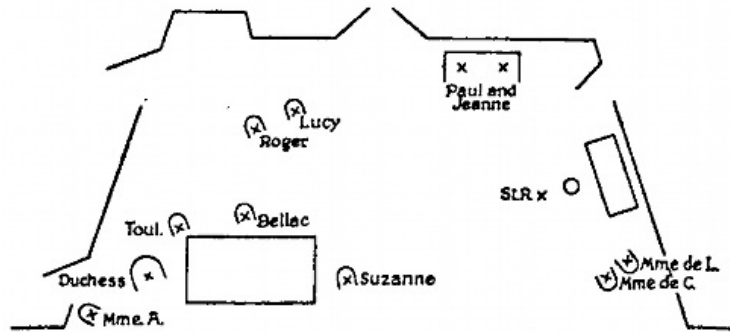
There are no specific directions as to the position of the sofa and chairs, but as a large number of characters are on the stage at one time, a great many will be necessary. The exact number of chairs, as well as the positions they will have to occupy, depend largely on the size and shape of the stage. The above diagram will serve at first as a working basis. Turning to the opening of the second act, we find the following directions:

[pg 54]

(Same as Act 1.

(Bellac, Toulonnier, Roger, Paul Raymond, Madame de Céran, Madame de Loudan,

Madame Arriégo, the Duchess, Suzanne, Lucy, Jeanne seated in a semi-circle, listening to Saint-Réault, who is finishing his lecture).



SAINT-RÉAULT. And, make no mistake about it! Profound as these legends may appear because of their baffling exoticism, they are merely—my illustrious father wrote in 1834—elemental, primitive imaginings in comparison with the transcendental conceptions of Brahmin lore, gathered together in the Upanishads, or indeed in the eighteen Paranas of Vyasa, the compiler of the Vedda.

JEANNE (*aside to Paul*). Are you asleep?

[pg 55]

PAUL. No, no—I hear some kind of gibberish.

SAINT-RÉAULT. Such, in simple terminology, is the *concretum* of the doctrine of Buddha.—And at this point I shall close my remarks.

(*Murmurs. Some of the audience rise*).

Here two or three—Bellac and Roger, and one of the ladies, let us say—rise, and chat in undertones in a small group among themselves.

SEVERAL VOICES (*weakly*). Very good! Good!

SAINT-RÉAULT. And now—(*He coughs*).

MADAME DE CÉRAN (*eagerly*). You must be tired, Saint-Réault?

At this, Madame de Céran might well rise, as if to put an end to Saint-Réault's speech. The others are impatient, and perhaps one or two start to rise. The others whisper, or appear to do so. Then Saint-Réault continues:

SAINT-RÉAULT. Not at all, Countess!

MADAME ARRIÉGO. Oh, yes, you must be; rest yourself. We can wait.

It is likely that here Madame Arriégo would rise and go to Saint-Réault. Two or three others would follow her.

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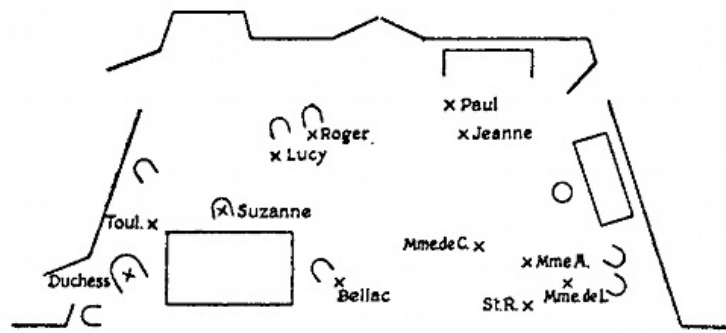
SEVERAL VOICES. You must rest!

MADAME DE LOUDAN. You can't always remain in the clouds. Come down to earth, Baron.

SAINT-RÉAULT. Thank you, but—well, you see, I had already finished.

(*Everybody rises*).

Saint-Réault's audience may then form into small groups, somewhat as follows:



Care must be taken not to give the stage a crowded appearance, nor yet an air of too well-ordered symmetry. To continue:

SEVERAL VOICES. So interesting!—A little obscure!—Excellent!—Too long!

BELLAC (*to the ladies*). Too materialistic!

PAUL (*to Jeanne*). He's bungled it.

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SUSANNE (*calling*). Monsieur Bellac!

BELLAC. Mademoiselle?

SUSANNE. Come here, near me.

(*Bellac goes to her*).

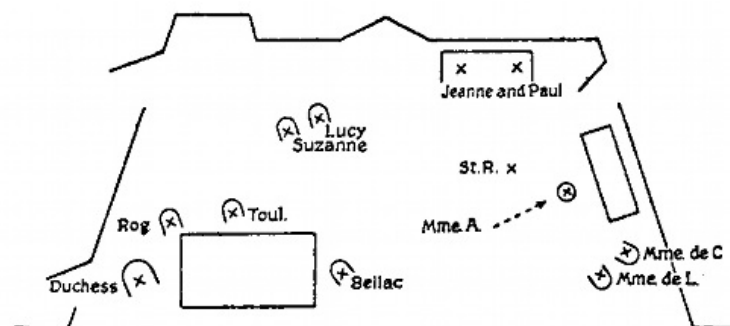
ROGER (*aside to the Duchess*). Aunt!

The direction "*aside to the Duchess*" shows that (1) Roger, after the company rose, either went to the Duchess; or that, (2) meantime he goes to her. This may be done either way, so long as the two are within reasonable whispering distance.

DUCHESS (*aside to Roger*). She's doing it on purpose!

SAINT-RÉAULT (*coming to table*). One word more! (*General surprise. The audience sit down in silence and consternation*).

Bearing in mind the change of position of Bellac, Roger, and Saint-Réault, we may reseat the characters as follows:



While, as has been said, grouping depends to a great extent on the size and shape of the stage, it should always be borne in mind that the stage should in most cases be made to resemble a picture as regards balance and composition. This means that the director must avoid crowding; that the actors must learn to take their places as part of that picture, and not attempt either to usurp the center of the stage or to disappear behind other actors. No grouping should ever be left to chance or the inspiration of the moment; every actor must have marked down in his own script every movement he makes. Groups and crowds require a great deal of rehearsing, in order that they may always assume the right position at the right moment.

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When an impression of vast numbers of people is desired—as in "Julius Cæsar"—large numbers of "supes" are not needed. Eight or ten or twelve people, well managed, are sufficient to create an effect of this sort on a small stage, and perhaps twenty on a large. The basic principle of the art of the theater is suggestion, not reproduction.

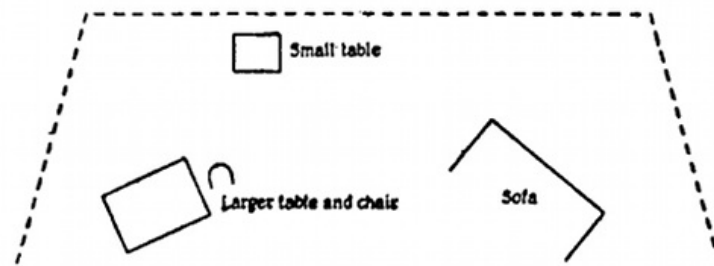
In the "forum scene" of Shakespeare's "Julius Cæsar" there are practically no stage directions. The management of the mob, therefore, is left entirely to the director. When the Third Citizen says: "The noble Brutus is ascended. Silence!" we are of course given to understand—by the word "Silence!"—that there has been some noise and confusion. The text affords the most important indications.

Plot out, for practice, the position of the various members of the mob throughout this scene.

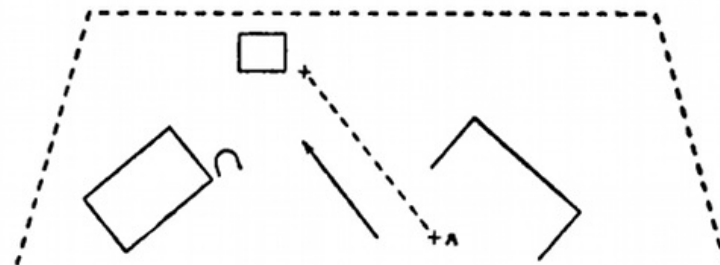
As a rule, the best impression of a crowd is made by massing and manipulating groups of from three to six individuals. If movement is demanded, it must be precise and measured out carefully during rehearsals. Therefore, since it is nearly always impossible to get trained actors to compose mobs, it is well to intersperse two or three "leaders" in any crowd, who will give the cue for concerted action.

The foregoing discussion, both in the present and preceding chapter, has been made largely from the director's and the stage manager's viewpoint. Let us now go back to the actor, and suggest a few methods which will help him.

An easy and vivid way of remembering "business" at first is to make a very simple diagram, thus:



Supposing A, who stands down-stage before the sofa, crosses up-stage to the small table, as he says: "I'll not stand it any longer!" Just after this line, the actor places a mark referring him to the margin of his "script", and makes another diagram:



This represents A crossing to up-stage, left of the small table. In this way, when the actor is studying his lines, he cannot help studying the "business", and vice versa; and since lines and "business" almost always go hand in hand, he will run no danger of having first learned the one without the other.

Considerable confusion is likely to arise when an overzealous director insists that his actors be "letter perfect" before the "business" is well formulated and worked out and thoroughly learned.

In the first chapter on Rehearsing, the blocking-out process was discussed, but the order in which each act was to be rehearsed, the time to be spent on it, etc.—these matters were deferred, and will now be taken up.

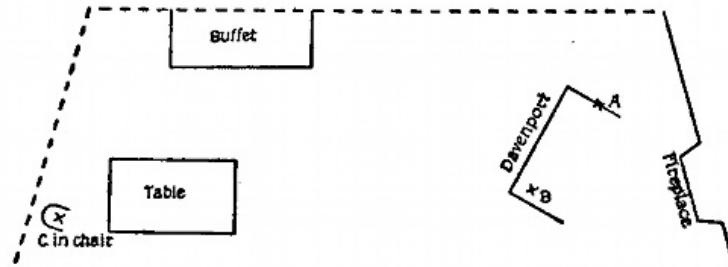
At the next rehearsal—that is, after the blocking-out of the first act—the second is treated in the same way. And after the last act has been blocked out, the first should be rehearsed with greater care. Details of "business", grouping, the delivery of lines—especially the correction of errors in interpretation—must be carefully considered. Probably some of the "business" blocked out in the first rehearsal will have to be changed, or at least amplified. Entrances and exits must be repeatedly rehearsed until they go smoothly. The crossings and recrossing of one, two, or more characters, can scarcely be rehearsed too often.

Let us take a few examples of this sort of detail work. A man comes home late, tired and hungry. Outside the sitting room through an open door, is seen the hatrack. How can this simple incident be made to appear true and interesting? Here is at least one manner of accomplishing it: a door is heard closing off-stage; footsteps resound in the hall. A, the man, appears, wearing a hat,

overcoat, and gloves, at the Center door, looks into the room to see whether any one is present, seems surprised, utters a short exclamation, and then turns to the hatrack. His back to the audience, he takes off his hat, hangs it carelessly on a hook, then slowly draws off his gloves, allows his coat to fall from his shoulders, looks at himself in the glass for an instant, and then, with a sigh, comes into the room again.

The incident, of course, is capable of a hundred variations, depending upon the character of the man, the circumstances under which he comes home, and so forth.

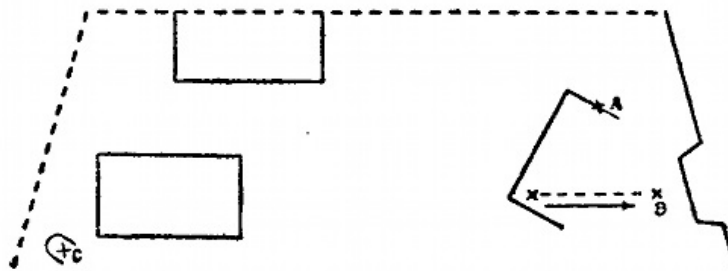
Or, a little more complicated instance: A, B, and C, three men, are seated, talking after dinner. They are stationed as follows:



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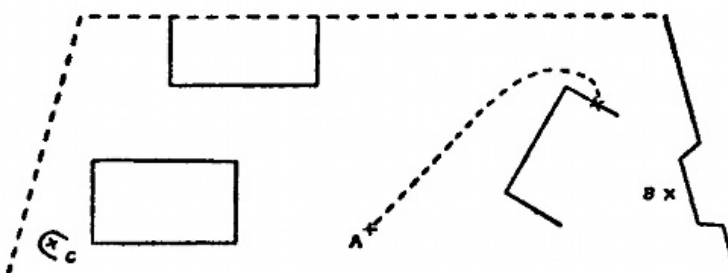
A sits on the arm of the davenport, B on the davenport itself, and C in a chair at the lower right-hand side of the table.

Notice first that the davenport is not placed at right angles to the audience; this is done so that two people, sitting side by side, may be better seen by the "house." Notice, too, that A is at the extreme left-hand corner of the davenport. Visualize this for an instant: here is proportion, line, and balance, but without the appearance of stiffness or symmetry, which should always be avoided. B rises and stands before the fireplace: again notice the grouping:



A then rises and goes to the center of the stage, standing near the left of the table:

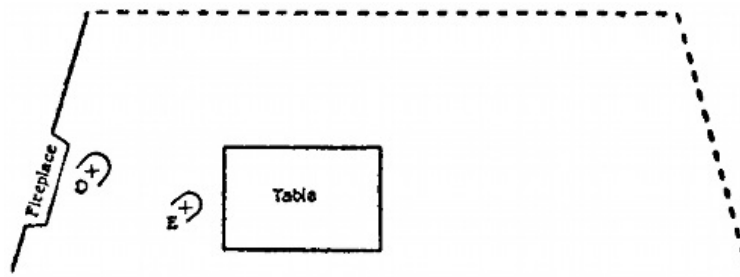
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This simple moving about the room should never be obtrusive; that is to say, the audience must never be conscious of the director's hand. First, every bit of "business", every move, every gesture, must be justified, otherwise it calls attention to itself. This is a distinct problem with amateurs, who naturally find it difficult not to move about when they have nothing else to do. They feel self-conscious unless they are "acting." The best rule for any amateur—although it is again the director who is responsible and should look after this—is, never to do anything unless he knows precisely why he does it, and unless he *feels* it.

One further example: imagine a five-minute conversation, in the text of which there are no stage directions. It is between two women: D and E. They are seated, one in an arm-chair by the fire, the other in an ordinary chair to the right of a library table:

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There are not many plays in which two characters *merely* converse for so long a period without well-motivated reasons, but it is well to take an extreme example. Let us assume that D is telling E the story of her life, and that for two minutes her speech contains little more than straight narrative. Suddenly she tells a sad incident, and E, who has a sympathetic nature, wipes her eyes with her handkerchief. D continues, and E, no longer able to restrain her tears but not wishing to show her emotion to D, rises and goes to the left of the stage for a moment or two. The long conversation scene is now broken up by a natural bit of action. While in life such a conversation might consume hours, on the stage it must be made more attractive and emotionally stimulating; in the theater, the appeal is through the eye and ear, to the emotions.

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Such a scene as the one just outlined must be repeatedly rehearsed, until every detail of the "business" is worked out perfectly.

After approximately ten days' work on the first act—during which period each of the other acts should be run through at least three times—the actors should be letter perfect and able to give a fairly smooth performance.

Then the other acts are rehearsed in like manner. Each act, after it is finished in this way, must be rehearsed at least every three or four days. When all the acts have been worked out, then each rehearsal is devoted to going through the whole play. Minor points in acting, minor "business", rendering of the lines, voice, gesture, etc., must naturally be insisted upon. Special cases must be dealt with outside the regular rehearsals, for the play should be interrupted as seldom as possible, because it is wise to let the actors become accustomed to going through the entire piece. It will be found expeditious, too, for small groups of characters who have scenes together to rehearse by themselves. The full rehearsals of the play are valuable both to actors and the director, for the latter is given a general view of his stage pictures which could in no other way be afforded him, and he is in a position to judge of his general and massed effects. At the same time the actors will more readily enter into the spirit of the work if they are permitted to play without interruption. Where the actors forget their lines, they should be prompted without other delay, but if they do anything actually wrong, or if the director wishes to make an important change, the performance must, of course, be stopped for a moment.

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The number of rehearsals necessary for the production of a play by amateurs depends largely on the attitude of the amateurs themselves, and the amount of time at their disposal. It is safe to say that ninety-nine out of a hundred such performances suffer noticeably from need of rehearsing. Nor is this to be wondered at, for the average professional play usually requires four or five weeks' rehearsing—seven to eight hours daily—for six and sometimes seven days in the week! Of course, an amateur is an amateur because he is not a professional, and he cannot afford very much time for work which is after all only a pastime. One other point should be well borne in mind: the average amateur has not the patience of the professional. If he is rehearsed too long or too steadily, he will grow "stale", and lose interest in his work.

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Still, no full-length play can safely be produced with less than four weeks' work, on an average of five rehearsals of three hours each, per week. (This does not include special and individual outside rehearsals.) Four weeks is the shortest time that can be allowed, while six or seven should be devoted to it. So much time is not necessary in order that the company may attempt to become professionals; that would be impossible and not at all advisable. The amateur, if rightly trained, should be able to impart a certain natural, naïve, unprofessional tone to the part he is impersonating, but this can only be done by constant rehearsing. The director usually finds that the amateur's first instinct is to imitate the tricks of the professional actor, and not allow himself to *feel* the character of the rôle. The professional quickly assimilates mannerisms which are only too likely to become mechanical, but which the amateur, because he is an amateur, is not likely to learn, if at first he is trained to avoid them.

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There is no particular excuse for presenting plays which can be seen acted anywhere and any time by professionals; amateurs should strive to produce classics, or modern plays which for one reason or another are not often seen, and impart to them that peculiar flavor which charms as well as interests and attracts. Nor is there much use in the amateur actor's striving to become professional in manner: he cannot hope, in the short time he can spare for his work, to become a good professional; or, if he gives signs of becoming such, then he no longer belongs in amateur dramatics. Allow the amateur plenty of leeway in the matter of interpretation, if he has any original ideas of his own; but of course these must never be at variance with the general idea of the play.

Let him work out his own salvation: here lies the value of amateur production, both to the actor and to the audience.

Often amateurs are called upon to portray feelings, actions, passions, of which they have no knowledge or experience. Love scenes, for instance, are invariably difficult. In this case, the actors must be taught a few conventional gestures, attitudes, and tricks, but they should not be permitted—except in rare cases—to lay much stress on the acting. This also applies to such purely conventional matters as kissing, dying, fighting, etc., for which a set of recognized technical tricks has been evolved. Any competent director can train actors to do this.

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One more point before this part of rehearsing is dispensed with: amateur productions suffer largely from a lack of continuous tension and variety. Often the action is slow, jerky, and consequently tedious. Constant rehearsing, with a view to inspiring greater confidence and sureness in the actors, under a good director, is the best means to overcome these great drawbacks. The last eight or ten rehearsals, after the cast are familiar with their lines and "business", are the most important in the matter of tempo. Details of shading, well-developed and modulated action, and a well-defined climax, are what must be worked for. When the actors are no longer thinking of when they must cross or sit down or rise, they are ready to enter wholeheartedly into the spirit of the play as an artistic unit.

As an example, on a small scale, of how a scene may be modulated and shaded, two pages from Meilhac and Halévy's "Indian Summer" (published by Samuel French) are here reprinted with marginal notes explaining how these effects are obtained.

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Slowly and quietly. ADR. Just a moment ago I forgot that such a thing was out of the question—
BRI. Why out of the question—?
ADR. Why, because—

Slight increase of speed and tension. BRI. Because what? How much did that American family pay you? I'll give you twice as much—three times as much. Whatever you want!
ADR. Only to read to you?
BRI. Why, yes.

ADR. That wouldn't be so bad—there's just one thing against it—it might be just a wee bit compromising!
BRI. Oh!

Slowly rising tension and speed. ADR. Really, don't you think so? Just a bit?
BRI. At my age?
ADR. (*gaily*). Oh, it's all very well—a young person like me—alone with you. (*Seriously*.) Oh, if you only didn't live alone—!
BRI. If I—? If I weren't alone?

Staccato. ADR. If you only had some relatives—married relatives—your nephew, for instance, with his wife—then I might—
BRI. Once more, don't speak to me of—! He's the one that brought all this trouble on us—that letter that forces you to—that letter came from him.

Emphasis (ADRIENNE *makes a quick movement of protest*.) 'Tisn't his fault, I know, but I hold a grudge against him as if it were—

Momentary pause. ADR. And yet, if I told you—
BRI. (*stopping her*). Shh! If you please. (*Pause*.)

Diminuendo. ADR. (*moved*). Then I must go. That was the only way; and you don't want to do that. *Tense,* I'm sure I don't know what will happen afterward. I still hope—But for the moment, I *but quiet.* must (*Mild access of crying*). Oh I'm sorry—so sorry—(*Falls into chair at side of table*).

Slight BRI. (*excitedly*). Adrienne!

increase
again.

ADR. (*recovering mastery over herself*). I beg your pardon—there! There! (*Brushing away her tears*). See, it's all over!

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BRI. Adrienne!

ADR. (*rising*). Monsieur!

BRI. It's true, then, if there were some way, you would—? Not the way I mentioned just now—but another—you wouldn't leave, would you? You'd stay here—near me—always—and be happy?

Quickly
increasing
rise.

ADR. (*lightly*). Oh yes, it's too—I say it from the bottom of my heart!

Quickly.

BRI. Very well, you shan't go.

ADR. I—?

BRI. No, you shan't go.

ADR. But—how?—Why?

Moment BRI. I have found a way!

of
suspense. ADR. And it is?

BRI. To make you my wife!

Climax.

ADR. (*Sits down again, overcome*).

BRI. I'll do it!—Go and speak to your Aunt—Here! Come here! (*Enter NOEL, right, carrying a bundle of papers*). Come here! Don't be afraid! You may go and get your wife. Bring her here! I'll forgive her as I forgive you! (*Shakes hands warmly with NOEL*).

High
tension
after the
climax, and
preparatory
to
another
climax
later on.

NOEL. Uncle!

BRI. You were right—now I know it! What do I care if she is a watchmaker's daughter? Go and get your wife—bring her here—and we'll live together, the four of us—

NOEL. All four of us?

BRI. Yes, all four! (*To ADRIENNE*). I am going to speak to your Aunt—I'll be back at once. (*Exit Center*).



"SISTER BEATRICE" OF MAETERLINCK, PRODUCED AT THE WESTERN RESERVE COLLEGE FOR WOMEN.

The simple hangings produce a good cyclorama effect. (Courtesy of Miss Ida Treat).

CHAPTER VI

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REHEARSING III

THE dress rehearsal usually takes place on the night before the regular performance.

Every effort must be made on this occasion to have conditions, on the stage and behind it, as nearly as possible like those under which the play is to be given. Scenery, lighting, costumes, must all be ready, and the performance carried through with as few interruptions as the director can afford to make. The director should be in the back of the "house", and stop the players only when they do something absolutely wrong. It is very unwise to change lines or "business" at this eleventh hour. The stage manager and his assistants must be in their assigned places, the lights manipulated, actors "called", the curtain rung up and down on schedule. The director watches the general effects, sees that the stage is not crowded, that the lights are in order, and above all, watches the tempo of the performance.

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The actors must be informed that on the occasion of the performance the audience is likely to distract them by applause, laughter, etc., and that they, the actors, must pause for a moment when there is any such interruption. A little advice as to resting, not worrying about lines, etc., will not be out of place.

Besides the *acting* dress rehearsal, there should be a scene and light rehearsal. This is merely for the assistants behind the stage. The different scenes (if there is more than one) should be set and "struck" (taken down), furniture and "props" stationed, lights worked, exactly as they are to be on the following night. Everything should go according to clockwork, the stage manager "holding the book" on all his assistants.

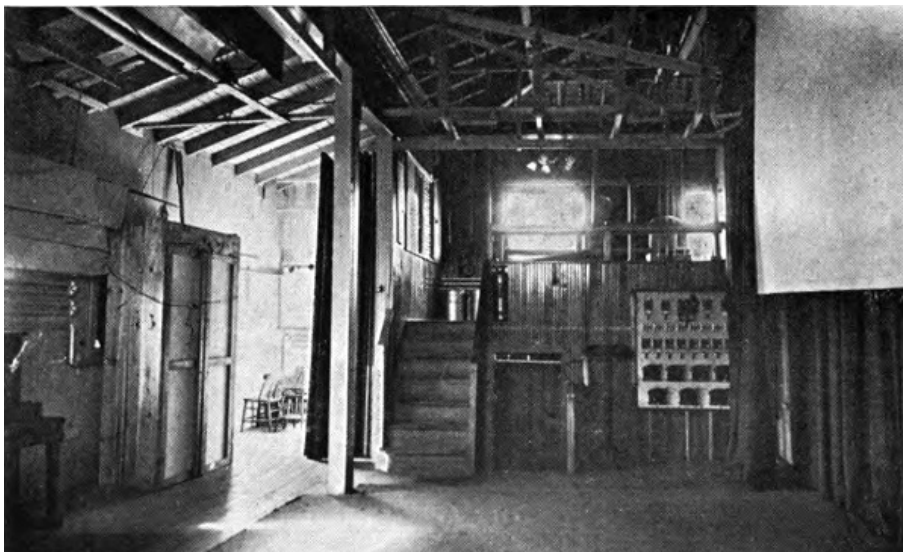
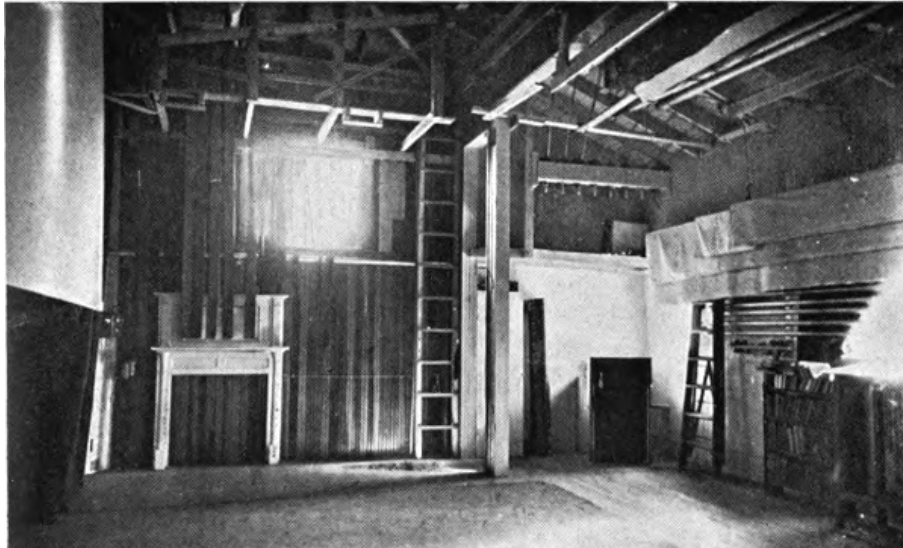
The performance should begin on time. Every one knows the irksome delay usually incident to amateur performances, and it ought to be the object of every director to remedy a defect which is inherent in our usual slipshod method of reproducing plays. Promptness is the prime requisite of efficiency, and the production of plays is successful only when the component elements are organized on a sort of military basis. The actors must be in the theater on time, and "made-up" in costume, at least half an hour before the curtain rises. It is well for each actor to see the property man and make sure that all the "props" necessary to his part are in readiness. The property man himself must also check up his list for the last time, in order to avoid confusion during the performance.

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When everything is in order, there is little more to be done. The director might make a few

general remarks to the cast, endeavor to inspire them with confidence and impress upon them the necessity of playing together harmoniously, and so on, but if his work has been well done during rehearsals, this will not be necessary.

The prompter must follow the play line for line and be ready to prompt any actor who forgets his part. It is well for the stage manager to be near the prompter, in order that every cue for lighting, "business" off-stage—like ringing bells, shooting, etc.—may be acted upon as required.



TWO VIEWS OF THE STAGE AT TUFTS COLLEGE, SHOWING PLENTY OF OPEN SPACE FOR THE STORING AND SHIFTING OF SCENERY.

(Courtesy of L. R. Lewis).

CHAPTER VII

THE STAGE

A great deal more attention is being directed—in this country, at least—to the improvement of the physical requirements of the stage than heretofore. During the past few years, numerous writers^[10] have made a systematic study of theaters abroad and at home, and revealed the fact that on the whole our theaters, both before and behind the curtain, are antiquated, ill-equipped,

and fall far short of the infinite possibilities which have been made realized in certain cities of Germany and Russia.

[10] Hiram Kelly Moderwell, in his "The Theatre of To-day" (Lane), and Sheldon Cheney, in his "The Modern Movement in the Theatre" (Kennerley), have rendered signal service in this field. The first book contains a thoroughly systematic account of practically all the new theatrical experiments.

Revolutionary experiments in lighting, as well as in the disposition of stage settings, have, during the past ten or twelve years, opened up fields formerly undreamed of.

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It is not the purpose of this chapter to describe at great length these innovations; the reader is referred to the books of Moderwell and Cheney mentioned in the footnote above. A few elementary suggestions, however, which may be used by skilled and intelligent amateurs, will prove suggestive to the average director and stage manager.

It is likely that by far the greater number of amateur plays will be performed on a stage which is already built and equipped. In such cases, all the stage manager can do is to use his own scenery and at least have a voice in the matter of lighting. Still, many plays are performed on improvised stages, in private homes, clubs, or schoolrooms, or out-of-doors. This allows the stage manager a little more leeway, and often he may modify the size of the stage to suit himself, and introduce some innovations of his own.

To those who are in a position either to build or temporarily construct their own stages, this chapter is primarily addressed.

We shall now proceed to a consideration of a few of the more important innovations on the modern stage. The first of these is undoubtedly:

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The Cyclorama. This is "a white or tinted backing for the stage, built in the form of a segment of a vertical cylinder. It may be constructed of canvas or of solid plaster.... Now, if made of canvas, it is more usually kept, when not in use, on a vertical roller, at one side of the stage, near the front, and carried around behind the stage, unrolling from its cylinder the while, until it connects with a similar cylinder at the opposite side of the stage. It hangs from a circular iron rail, and almost completely encloses the stage, rising to the required distance.... It can be rolled up on its original cylinder when it is not needed, leaving the stage once more approachable from all sides.... The chief uses of the cyclorama are evident. It presents a continuous dead white or tinted background, which, when played upon by the proper lights, gives a striking illusion of depth and luminous atmosphere.... But perhaps the chief value of the cyclorama, from the standpoint of the stage artist, has not yet been mentioned. For the new device changes altogether the problem of lighting. Ordinary sunlight is, as we know, not a direct light, but an infinitely reflected light, bandied about by the particles of air and by the ordinary physical objects on which it strikes. The mellowness and internal luminosity of ordinary sunlight is wholly due to this infinite reflection. It was the lack of this that made the old stage lighting, with its blazing direct artificial glare, so unreal. The cyclorama, and especially the dome cyclorama, permits the stage to be lighted largely or wholly by crisscrossing reflection. The mellow and subtle lighting which makes it possible was altogether unknown under the older methods."^[11]

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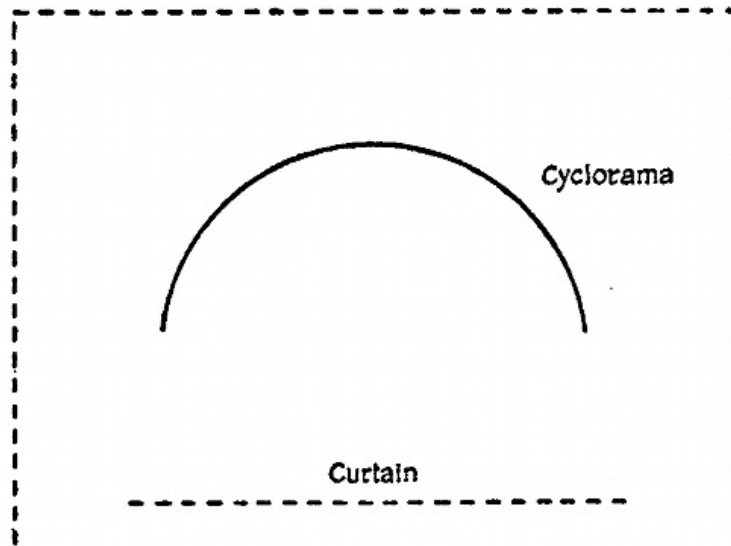
[11] Moderwell's "The Theatre of To-day." John Lane Company.

The construction of a cyclorama, either of cloth or of plaster, is rather difficult, but there are certain simple substitutes which may be used to secure some of its elementary effects. The following system has been used by some amateurs with signal success.

First take a wooden rod, or better, iron pipes, curved to the desired shape.

Fasten this framework either to the ceiling of the "loft" or, if that is too high, to the wings. On the rod hang curtains of burlap, or some similar material, or else two or three thicknesses of cheesecloth, so that they fall in simple folds. The color will depend on the sort of play to be produced and the kind of lights used. As a rule, dark tan, green, or dark red are the best colors, and can be used on many occasions and for nearly every sort of play. Whether the "cyclorama" thus improvised be permanent or temporary, this is one of the best possible backgrounds. In out-of-door scenes, it gives a suggestion of distance.

[pg 80]



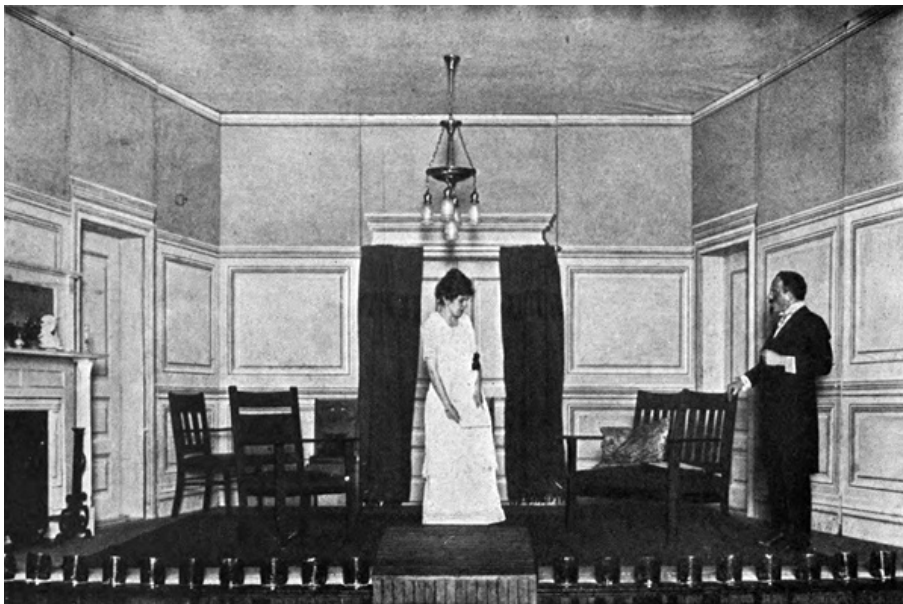
In Constance D'Arcy Mackay's book on "Costumes and Scenery for Amateurs" the author describes how a "desert and oasis" scene can be made from the simplest means:

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"A plain sand-colored floor cloth. A backdrop or cyclorama of sky-blue against which very low sand mounds appearing as if at great distance, with palm trees, also made small by distance. These mounds and palm trees should be painted low on the backdrop, since a vast stretch of level sand is what is to be suggested. It would even be possible to use a plain blue sky drop, and run some sand-colored cambric into mounds across the back of the stage, so as to break the sky line."

It is not necessary, though, to *paint* the cyclorama: darker cloth, made to represent mounds, thrown across the lower part of the cyclorama, would be equally effective. Further examples of what can be done with the cyclorama will be cited in the chapter on "Lighting."

Another of the recent innovations which is of particular value to amateurs is the system by which the proscenium opening can be made large or small, according to the demands of the play. Usually the proscenium looks like the following diagram.

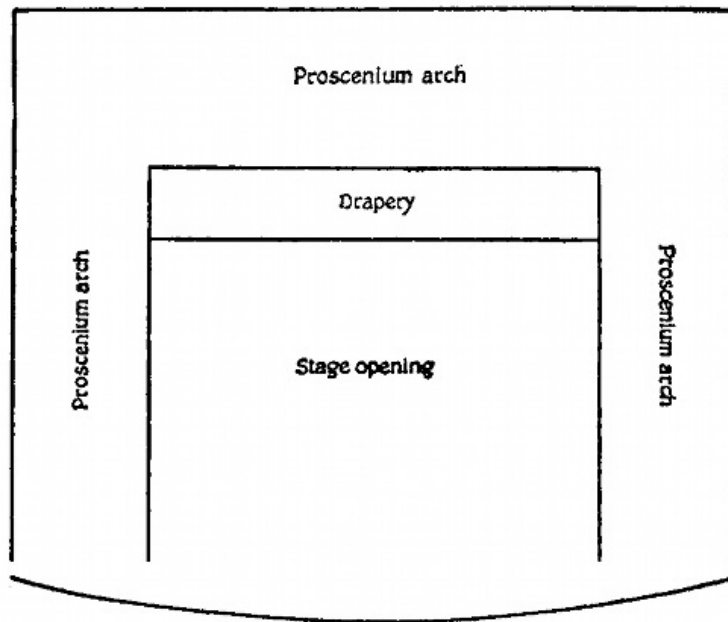


AN ORDINARY BOX-SET. FROM DUMAS FILS' "THE MONEY QUESTION", PRODUCED AT TUFTS COLLEGE.

(Courtesy of L. R. Lewis).

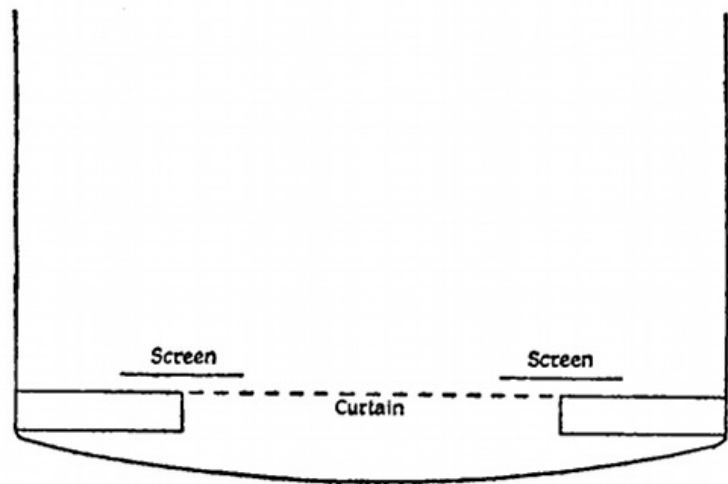
Suppose one scene of a play calls for a large courtroom filled with people. Obviously, all the stage space is required. But suppose that the next scene is a small antechamber. On the average stage the discrepancy is at once observed, and the effect is more than likely ridiculous. Even if the sets used are "box sets" (that is, with three walls and not mere conventional screens or curtains), the effect of great size can easily be obtained in the first scene, and smallness in the second, by means of the device about to be described. This applies, of course, to plays where the same set must be used for both scenes. If, however, a different set is used for the antechamber scene, the new device is imperative.

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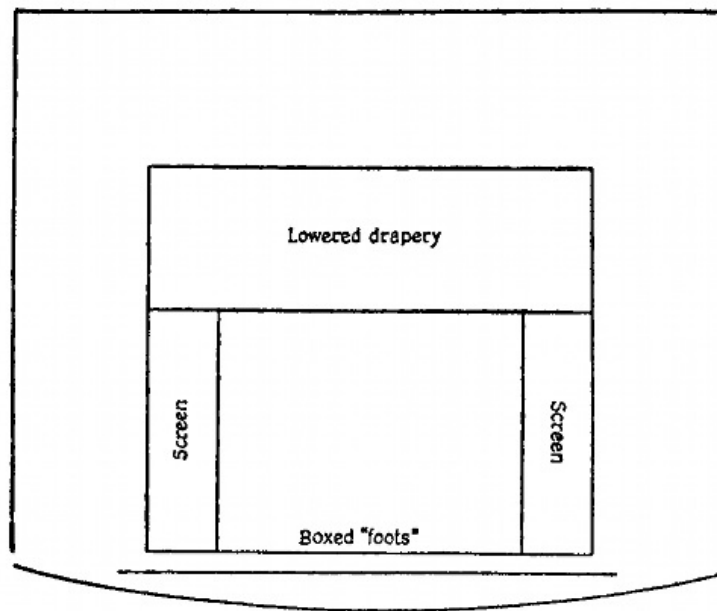
First, construct two tall screens (on a wooden framework), made either of painted canvas or draped cloth, of some dark and subdued tone, and place them on each side of the stage, just behind the proscenium arch, as in the diagram:

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These screens can be easily set closer to the center of the stage, thereby diminishing its size on the sides. Then the "grand drapery" above, which hangs down from behind the top of the proscenium arch, and which should be of the same color and material as the side screens, is lowered. This process makes, from the inside, a smaller proscenium arch. Many of the German and some other stages have added a fourth side to this frame, by "boxing" the footlights:

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This last, besides giving the effect of a detached picture to the set, prevents the direct rays of the footlights, when they are used, from shining up into the gallery.

To return to the smaller scene made by the inner proscenium arch, it will readily be seen that the cyclorama—if there is one—or back wall of the set, or else the curtain, must usually be brought forward a little. The advantage of the inner proscenium becomes apparent when such a play as "The Merchant of Venice" is performed, and the absurdity of using a stage of the same size for the Portia-Nerissa scene in the first act and the casket scene, is forcibly brought to our attention.

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The Revolving Stage and The Wagon Stage. These are fully described in the books which have been referred to. They are both extremely valuable, but as yet too complicated and expensive to be seriously considered for amateurs.

The introduction of simpler scenery and simpler lighting does away with much that was difficult to manage under the old system, and a few well-trained amateurs should be able to set and attend to almost any production without having recourse to the revolving stage and the "wagons."

As much space as possible should be kept clear behind the curtain; occasions are likely to arise when the entire stage may be used, and manipulation of scenery on a full stage is a difficult task.

A few suggestions as to lighting and its relation to scenery and color and action will be set forth in the next chapter.



CHAPTER VIII

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LIGHTING

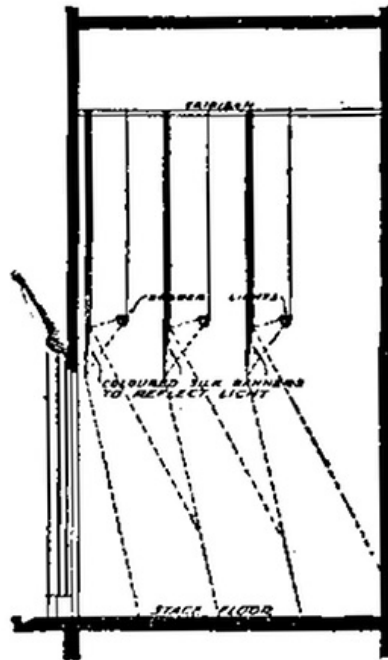
It has been rightly urged that recent inventions and discoveries in lighting constitute the greatest contribution to the modern art of the theater. This manual is intended primarily to help the producer and the actor, but the present short chapter may assist the former or his associates in their effort to improve the physical conditions of the stage.

The prevalent system of using footlights and border lights is on the whole bad, because it is false, unnatural, and above all unnecessary. Says Moderwell (pages 107-108, in "The Theatre of To-day"):

"Before we can begin work in artistic lighting we must do some destroying. One element in the old lighting must go, and go completely. We can say this with careless ease now that the Fortuny system has given us a better way. But even before this invention was made known, the case against the footlights must have been obvious to any sensitive man of the theatre; that the 'foots' continued as long as they did indicates

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the stagnation of the old theatre in all but purely literary art.



From "The Architectural Review."

OPERATION OF THE FORTUNY INDIRECT
LIGHTING SYSTEM.

"The footlights, with their corresponding border lights from above, give a flat illumination. They make figures visible, but not living; they destroy that most precious quality of the sculptor, relief.... It is the shadows, the nooks and crannies of light and shade, that show a figure to be solid and plastic."

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The Fortuny system mentioned is a device by which light is reflected and diffused: "An arc-lamp and several pieces of cloth of various colours—these comprise the Fortuny apparatus in its simplest form." While only an expert electrician and, if the effects are to be artistic, an artist, can erect and manipulate a system built on Fortuny's principles, still amateur electricians and directors should do their best, by means of experimentation, to use indirect lighting.

Just how this can be done must rest with individuals, but two or three experiments may be briefly described.

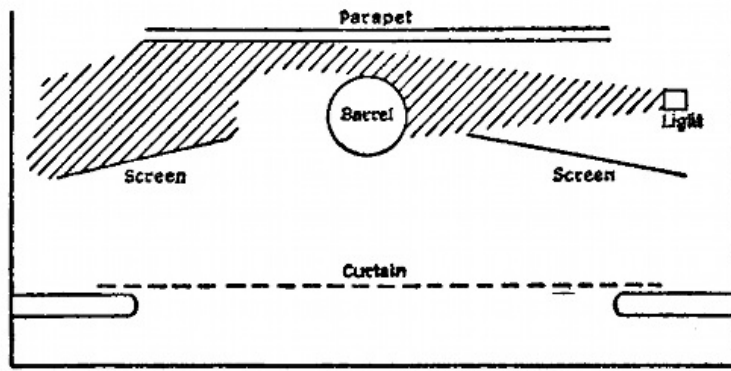
Suppose that the cyclorama, or the hangings masking the back of the stage, are made of white or light-colored cloth. In this case, an arc lamp or ordinary calcium light can be placed up in the loft, above the top of the cyclorama, and behind it. A little experimenting will reveal many striking light effects. If one light or lamp is not sufficient, others can be placed in various positions to reënforce it. As conditions vary so greatly, it is impossible to supply more concise directions.

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Where box sets are used in which there is at least one window, and provided the scene does not take place at night, it is much better to have all, or at least an appreciable portion of the light come in through one window. In the second act of Charles Klein's "The Music Master" played by David Warfield and produced by David Belasco, the stage was at one time brilliantly lighted, supposedly by sunshine from the outside, from the two opposite sides of the stage! If, however, screens and curtains are used (see chapter on "Scenery and Costumes"), then it is best to introduce some sort of central reflected light. To station lights on all sides of the stage will first of all make the stage too bright, and furthermore produce unnatural and distorted shadows: there is no chance for effects of relief or any illusion of plasticity. If possible, the footlights should be entirely eliminated; if not, then most sparingly used. Our stages are for the most part overlighted.

The production of Lady Gregory's "The Rising of the Moon" by the Irish Players was one of the simplest and at the same time most effective of stage pictures. The following diagram will show in a rough way the general disposition of the settings:

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The back of the stage (the shaded area) was flooded with white light to suggest moonlight. There were no "foots" or "borders"; anything besides the single light would have ruined the effect of perfect placidity.

CHAPTER IX

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SCENERY AND COSTUMES

VERY little need be said regarding the usual conventional sets, whether they represent interiors or exteriors. The purpose of this chapter is (1) to suggest simple but effective means of staging without using the conventional sets, and (2) to lay down a few principles as to costuming.

By means of the simple devices about to be described, the amateur is enabled to do without "box sets" and all the paraphernalia of the old stage. The tendency nowadays is away from naturalism in setting; the aim is rather to supply simple but beautiful backgrounds with as little obvious effort as possible; to suggest rather than to represent. When the word "conventional" is used it is intended to convey the meaning not of "old" and "hackneyed", but of "simple", "suggestive." Beardsley's drawings are conventional because attitudes and lines are conventionalized.

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In the main, there are three sorts of setting which may be used for practically all kinds of plays. They have been successfully tried out on numerous occasions, and few plays have been found which cannot fit at least one of them.

1. The first and simplest of them all consists of draperies and tall screens. The Greek classics and Shakespeare are particularly effective with this sort of background. Where Greek plays are given, a peristyle of wooden pillars up-stage, behind which may be hung white or tinted curtains, is especially desirable. Any Greek, and most Latin plays, can be produced with this setting. Often such plays are given in the open. If the performance takes place in the daylight, there is no difficulty as to artificial lighting; but if it is at night, then a flood-light must cover the stage. This is placed toward the back, or else behind the audience.

Shakespeare is seen at his best with the simple background. A sort of cyclorama may be constructed by using curtains hung at the back of the stage, upon which is thrown light from one place: behind the proscenium arch, from above, or from one of the sides. Suppose that "The Comedy of Errors" is the play to be performed. The first scene of the first act is "*A hall in the Duke's palace.*" This, of course, should be printed on the program, but on the stage all that is needed is a suggestion or two, like a gilded chair, and a painted white bench or two. These are not needed in the action, but they serve to create an atmosphere. The second scene is "*A public place.*" Absolutely no "props" or furniture are needed; indeed, their very absence indicates the "place." The first scene of the second act is the same. The curtains around the stage must be made in sections, in order to allow the actors to enter and exit through them. The lines are always sufficient to indicate where a person is coming from or going to. In the first scene of the third act, Dromio of Syracuse says:

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DRO. S. (*within*). Mome, malt-horse, capon, coxcomb, idiot, patch!

Either get thee from the door, or sit down at the hatch:

Dost thou conjure for wenches, that thou call'st for such store,

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When one is one too many? Go, get thee from the door.

A house is evidently intended to be represented, but it is not necessary that we see it: Dromio of Syracuse can speak from behind the curtain. The convention will readily be accepted. Nor is it necessary to differentiate the various "public places", except for the sake of variety: perhaps a bench or two now and then will accomplish this purpose. And when, in the first scene of the fifth act, the public place is "*before an abbey*", still there is no need of any definite set pieces. From time to time, doubtless some special article of furniture or set piece of some kind will be mentioned in the text, not elsewhere, in which case it can easily be supplied.

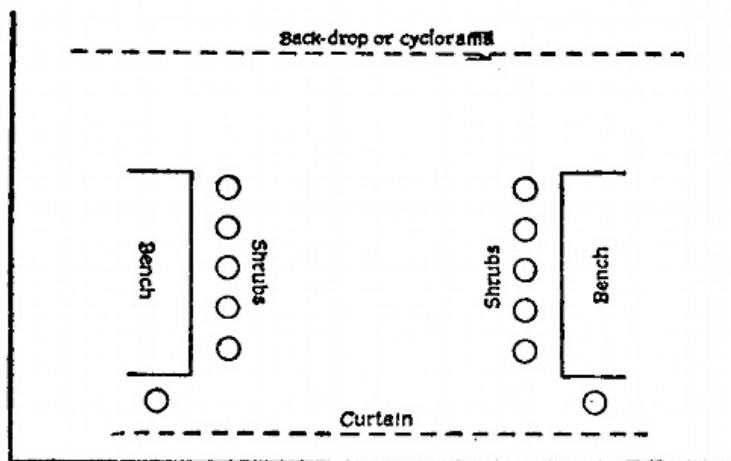
This "Shakespeare-without-scenery" is not the only method by which Shakespeare can be performed, but it is the easiest and, if done with taste, the most effective.

Let us now take rather a more difficult play, "Twelfth Night." The first scene of the first act is "*An apartment in the Duke's palace.*" The Duke sits on a sort of throne or sofa. In Max Reinhardt's production of this play at the Deutsches Theater in Berlin, the set consisted simply of a semicircular lounge extending all the way across the stage. It was covered with dark blue plush; the hangings were of the same color. A warm yellow light directed from above flooded the stage.

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Either a throne or sofa for the Duke, then, and a few other chairs for the remaining characters, who sit down—the musicians stand—or else, following Reinhardt, a semicircular lounge. This is all. The second scene is "*The seacoast.*" The stage is bare here. The third scene is "*A room in Olivia's house.*" Different chairs or sofas and a throne for Olivia. The following scene is the same as scene one. The first scene of the second act is the seacoast once more. The next is "*A street.*" No furniture. The third scene is "*A room in Olivia's house*"; evidently not the same as that in which Olivia first appeared. The room is probably in or near the wine cellar. A table, therefore, and three or four chairs, will not be amiss. The next is the same as in act one, scene one. The fifth scene of the second act is "*Olivia's garden.*" Here the stage business requires a few definitely placed shrubs and a bench or two. The best arrangement of this scene is suggested in the diagram:

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Malvolio comes down-stage Center, while the others are hiding behind one of the benches, either Left or Right. These benches, as indicated in the diagram, are partially concealed by shrubs. Baytrees, planted in green-painted tubs, make especially good decorations. They can be used on many occasions, as will be shown later. Nor, in the case of the scene from "Twelfth Night", are they so high as to conceal the actors who are supposed to be hidden behind them. The following scene is the same. The second scene of the third act is the cellar room again. Following this is "*A street*"; then "*Olivia's garden*" once more. The next new scene is the first of the fourth act: "*A street before Olivia's garden.*" Perhaps a little variety can be introduced in the shape of a shrub or two. The remaining scenes are repetitions of those already considered.

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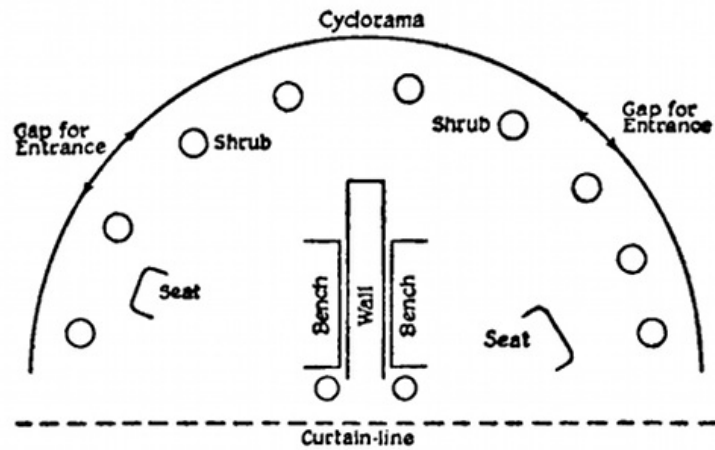
The suggestions above given are extremely summary, but, if acted upon, will be seen to prove sufficient.

2. Out-of-door scenes of a more elaborate character, in plays like Rostand's "The Romancers", often require more complicated sets; they may still be produced with the most elementary sort of background, however. The stage directions of this play are as follows:

SCENE: *The stage is divided by an old wall, covered with vines and flowers. At the right, a corner of BERGAMIN'S park is seen; at the left, a corner of PASQUINOT'S. On each side of the wall, and against it, is a rustic bench.*

This is set in the following manner:

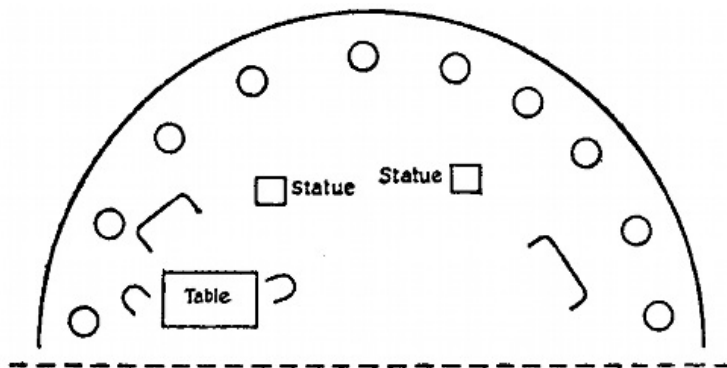
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The background hangings may be of tan burlap or else dark green. Gaps, covered by the folds, must be made up- and down-stage to allow the actors to enter and leave the stage. The wall must be constructed of solid wood, in order to support the actors, and painted to suggest bricks. There is a rustic bench against each side of the wall. Though they are not mentioned in these preliminary directions, there are other rustic benches, down-stage to the extreme right and left. These are used later in the act.

In the second act, *"the wall has disappeared. The benches which were formerly against it, are removed to the extreme right and left. [The extra benches mentioned in the first act have of course been removed.] There are a few extra pots of flowers and two or three plaster statues. To the right is a small garden table, with chairs about it."* This scene is set as follows:

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The third act stage directions are: *"The scene is the same except that the wall is being rebuilt. Bricks and sacks of plaster lie about."* A few bricks may serve to indicate the partly finished wall.

Since the scene of this play is laid at first in parks, there ought to be some suggestion as to this fact. Here bay- or box-trees can be used. Perhaps three or four should be arranged more or less symmetrically at the back of the stage, and as many to the right and left, down-stage. One or two can be added, close to the wall. This is all that is absolutely necessary.

The foregoing remarks have been applied largely to romantic plays, but what is to be done in modern realistic pieces? There are two courses open, besides the conventional one (using box sets):

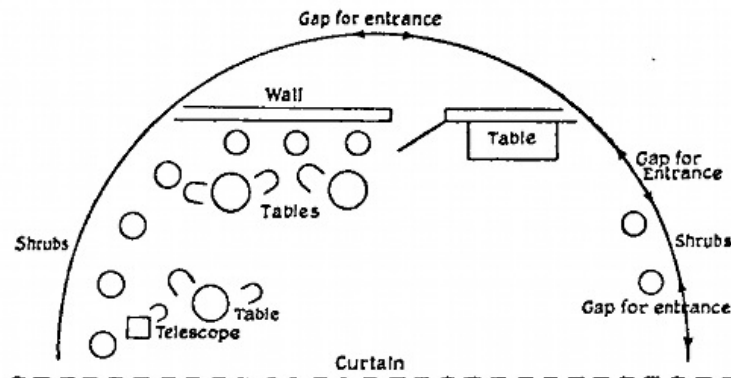
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The first method is to use the regular hangings as before and set a few needful articles of furniture about the stage. This is not realistic, but there are many realistic plays which can be produced without correspondingly realistic settings. Of course, where windows are referred to and used, there must be real windows, and where a character is directed to hang a picture on a wall, there must be a wall. However, there are many realistic plays where box sets are not required. Hermann Sudermann's "The Far-away Princess" is a case in question. The author has definitely suggested a certain setting for the play, but as his suggestions are not absolutely essential they may be modified. The directions are:

"The veranda of an inn. The right side of the stage and half of the background represent a framework of glass enclosing the veranda. The left side and the other half of

the background represent the stone walls of the house. To the left, in the foreground, a door; another door in the background, at the left. On the left, back, a buffet and serving table. Neat little tables and small iron chairs for visitors are placed about the veranda. On the right, in the centre, a large telescope, standing on a tripod, is directed through an open window. ROSA, dressed in the costume of the country, is arranging flowers on the small tables. FRAU LINDEMANN, a handsome, stoutish woman in the thirties, hurries in excitedly from the left."

If the dramatist's stage directions are implicitly followed, a realistic set will be required. The scene as set according to the diagram, has, however, often been used:



Once more, the little shrubs may be used in order to give an atmosphere of outdoors.

Or, to take an example of a "modern-interior" play in which the same conventionalized scenery may be used to advantage—Alfred Capus' "Brignol and his Daughter" (published by French) is set as follows:

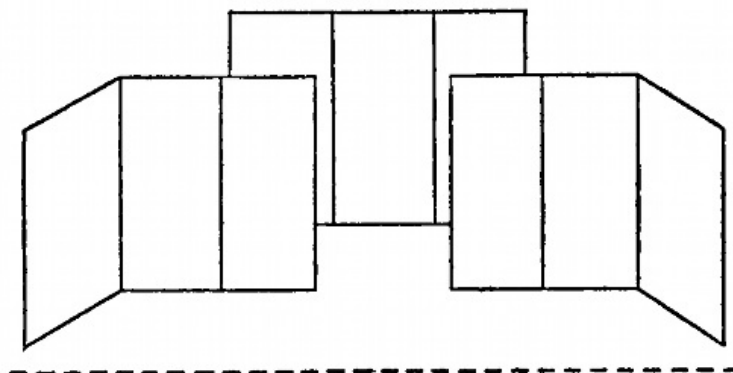
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SCENE: An office, fitted up with various articles of parlor furniture—rather pretentious in appearance. To the right, a table with letter-files, and a safe; beside the safe, a bookshelf. At the back is the main entrance; there are other doors, right and left, one opening upon a bed-room, the other upon the parlor.

Here the setting is so usual, so conventional, that no *actual* room is required: merely the table, chairs, safe, etc., as called for. Of course, it is not imperative that such plays should be set in this manner: the arrangement with screens about to be described is usually the best way. The point here to be impressed is that realistic sets are not always required for realistic plays.

3. By the introduction of screens—not to be confused with the large screens mentioned by Gordon Craig, however—practically any realistic play can be produced. The diagram below will afford some idea of the very simple principle:

[pg 10]



Three screens, about seven feet high, made in three sections, and covered with burlap or some similar material, are all that will usually be required on a moderately small stage. These can be set in various ways. If an ordinary room is called for, they may be set as in the above diagram.

"Brignol and his Daughter" may be staged by using three screens (as in the diagram above): the opening at the back is the center door; the doors on the right and left are the openings left between the lower ends of the side screens and the inside of the proscenium arch. The furniture is set in this scene as it is required in the stage directions. If the proscenium opening is too large, then the grand drapery can be lowered to within two or three feet of the top of the screens, and the side screens, behind the sides of the proscenium arch, brought closer together. Behind the screens representing the room, burlap or a suitable substitute may be hung. To take concrete

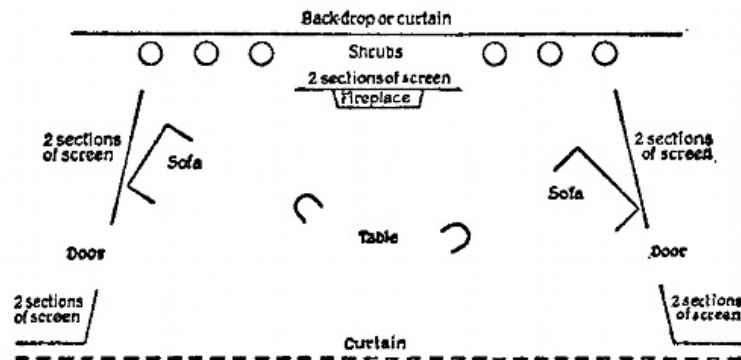
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examples once more, the setting of the first act of "A Scrap of Paper" (the adaptation by J. Palgrave Simpson) is thus described in the text:

Drawing-room in a French country house. Windows to the floor, R.C. [Right Center] and L.C. [Left Center], at back, looking out on gardens and park. The window L.C. is at first closed in with barred Venetian shutters. The window R.C. opens on the garden. Fireplace, C. [Center] between the windows, surmounted by a mirror. On each side of the mirror is a bracket, within reach of the hand; the one R. supporting a statuette of FLORA, the other, L., empty. Doors, R. 2 E [See diagram] and L. 2 E. Sofas R. and L. upstage. At C. of stage is a round table, with a lamp, and an embroidery frame, a book and other objects scattered upon it in great disorder. Chairs R. and L. of table. Arm chairs R.C. and L.C., downstage. The furniture is to be rich but old-fashioned, and a little worn. Carpet down.

[pg 10]

Five screens are here required: one at the back, behind the fireplace; and two on each side of the stage. Only two of the three folding sections of each are used.



The fireplace must be "practical"—that is, it must have a wooden framework. In case a mirror is desired, it can be lower than a mirror usually is, and made of mosquito netting, to avoid reflections. A very few pictures may be hung on the screens. The hangings at the back of the stage—masking the bare walls—are of the same sort as have been described before, but the color of the screens must harmonize with them.

With such a background, and by means of screens, shrubs, and a few necessary set pieces, like the wall in the Rostand play, the author has seen a dozen widely different plays produced by amateurs, in not one of which was the slightest noticeable discrepancy or anything that would shock even the theatergoer who is accustomed to the elaborate and often unnecessary settings of David Belasco.

[pg 10]

As may be easily imagined, the possibilities of variation upon these simple settings are infinite. Experimentation, as always, will reveal new fields.

Before closing the chapter, a word may be said of the flat background near the curtain line. About four or five feet behind the curtain line—*i.e.* the place where the curtain falls to the stage—hang a drop, either of burlap, or else a white drop like that used in stereopticon lectures. This, either played upon by lights in "the house", or from behind the stage, forms a striking background for scenes of pantomime, a street—as in "Twelfth Night"—a wall, a forest, almost anything. Such a screen was most effectively used in one scene of Reinhardt's production of "Sumurûn." A still more striking effect was achieved in a performance of "Peer Gynt" at the Lessing Theater in Berlin. The scene was the one in which Peer Gynt is before the pyramid in Egypt. About five feet behind the curtain line a white screen was dropped. Diagonally across this screen was thrown a dark purple light, while over the remaining space a saffron yellow played. That was all, but the suggestion of the vast shadow of the pyramid and the yellow sunlight and the yellow sands of Egypt was far more impressive than any *representation* of the pyramid and desert could be.

[pg 10]

In case the effect of a distant city is desired, then another (darker and thicker) cloth, cut to represent the outlines of buildings and the like, can be sewed against the drop, thus producing the effect of a silhouette.

In fine, the whole problem of staging resolves itself into this: achieve your effects in as simple a way as possible; suggest, do not try to represent; scenery, which ought indeed to be a delight to the eye, is after all only background. Experiment, but never hesitate to ask the advice of those who know the basic principles of color, line, and form, as well as those who have technical knowledge

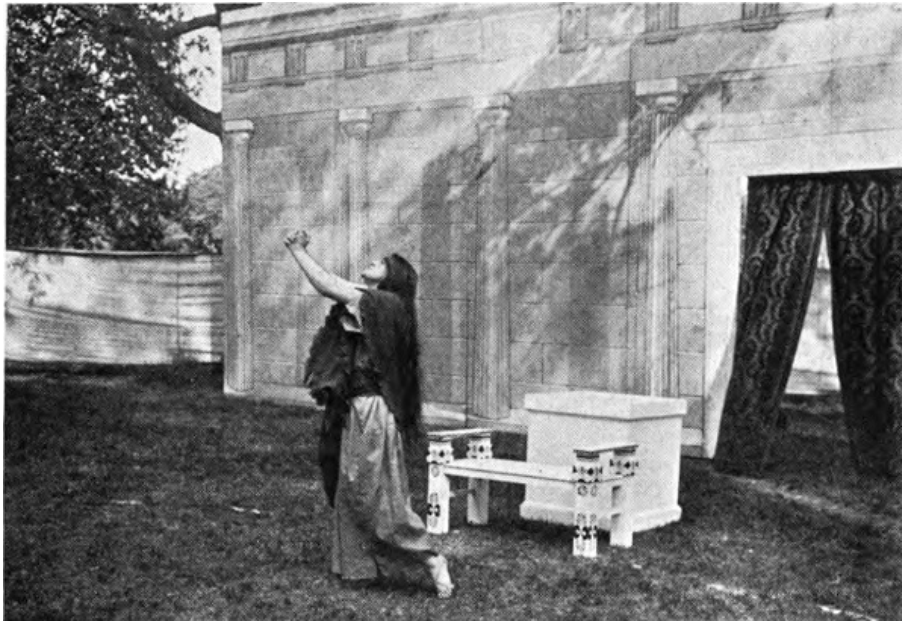
of every branch of the art and craft of the theater.

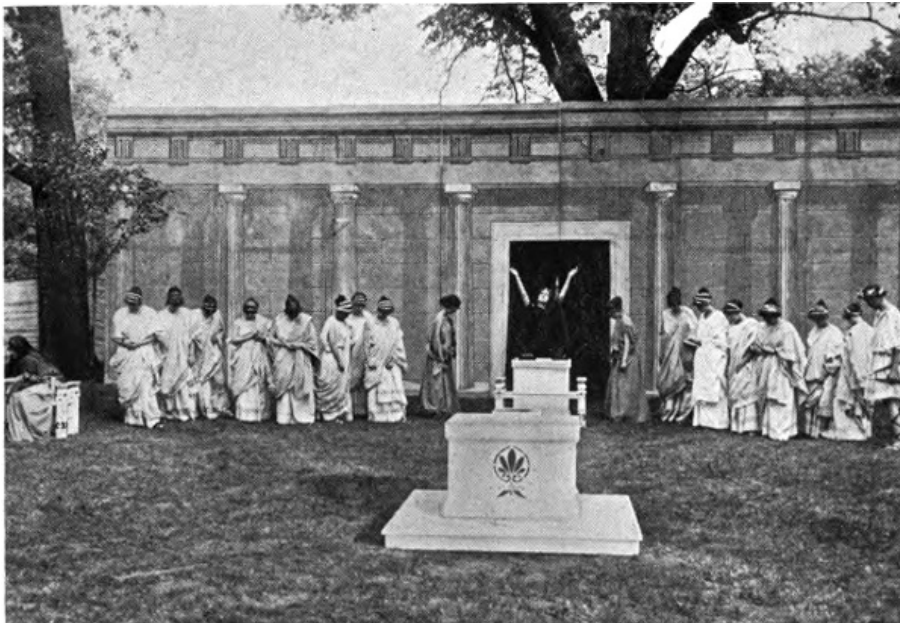
Costumes. In his introductory remarks to "The Romancers", Rostand says that the action may take place anywhere, "provided the costumes are pretty." This is the basis of the few brief remarks to be made here on the subject of costumes. It must not be concluded, however, that any costumes may be used on any occasion. A modern play must have modern costumes—except in such plays as "The Blue Bird" and "Chantecler"—and a "period play" must at least approximate in spirit the age in which the action transpires. But it makes little difference whether Hamlet wears a tenth or eleventh century Danish costume, or one of the age of Elizabeth. It is a well-known fact that in Shakespeare's days there was little or no regard for historical accuracy in costumes, and that even in the historical plays the actors wore contemporary clothes. The point to be impressed is not that we should play "Julius Cæsar" in dress clothes, but that such discrepancies as were allowed in Elizabethan days could not have made very much difference, and that nowadays it is not worth while to spend too much time over details. In Greek plays it is well to use Greek costumes, because we have long been accustomed to associate some sort of archeological detail with plays of a certain age; and besides, Greek costumes are beautiful. But, and this is of great importance, do not strive to be historically exact: so long as costumes are beautiful and harmonize with the setting, and so long as they are not absurd or too much out of harmony with the play, they are good. There are numerous exceptions. Where a play definitely calls for a distinct atmospheric setting—like Bennett and Knoblauch's "Milestones"—then the utmost effort must be made to obtain correct costumes and setting. But the reason why the first act of this play requires historical accuracy is that the audience knows very well what mid-Victorian clothes are like. If the play were given in the year 2500 A.D., it is safe to say that Elizabethan or Queen Anne costumes might do just as well.

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[pg 10

However, historical accuracy, when it can be obtained as easily as not, is never superfluous.





TWO VIEWS OF THE STAGE AT THE UNIVERSITY OF NORTH DAKOTA.

(Courtesy of Frederick H. Koch).

CHAPTER X

[pg 11

SELECTIVE LISTS OF AMATEUR PLAYS

THE following lists, which do not pretend to completeness, will at least be found helpful in assisting amateur organizations to choose "worth-while" plays. The general headings "Classic", etc, are clear, but the following explanations must be made regarding the other markings:

An asterisk (*) indicates that the play is in one act. Those not so marked are in more than one act, and are in most cases "full length."

The letter "S" denotes serious or tragic plays, intended in nearly every case for advanced amateurs.

The letter "R" denotes plays of a romantic and poetic nature.

The letter "C" denotes comedies, farces, and plays in lighter vein.

The letter "F" in parenthesis after the title indicates that a fee is charged for production by amateurs. The publisher or agent (see footnotes), must be consulted for particulars.

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The letter "D" denotes modern dialect plays, like those of Lady Gregory. Most of these plays are included under the general heading of "Classic" because the costumes and setting, though they may be modern, are not the familiar modern costumes and settings.

All plays not included in the first division "*Classics, including modern costume and historical plays*" are to be found in the second division: "*Modern plays*."

It is nearly always unwise for an amateur organization to take a play on faith; it is therefore advisable for it to collect a library of amateur plays, from which successive generations of members can at least form some judgment of the field from which they are to select their plays.

This list makes no pretence to completeness. It has been the writer's purpose merely to mention a number of classic and standard plays which amateurs can produce without too great difficulty.



SCENES FROM EURIPIDES' "ELECTRA". PRODUCED AT ILLINOIS STATE COLLEGE.

(Courtesy of Rollin H. Tanner).

CLASSICS, INCLUDING MODERN COSTUME AND HISTORICAL PLAYS

Greek

RS Euripides, *Alcestis* (Samuel French; Walter H. Baker)

RS Sophocles, *Antigone* (Samuel French; E. P. Dutton, in Everyman's Library)

RC Aristophanes, *The Clouds* (Macmillan; "The Drama", Victorian edition)

C *Lysistrata* (Samuel French. Another version, by Laurence Housman, published by The Woman's Press, London)

Latin

C Plautus, *The Twins* (Samuel French)

C Terence, *Phormio* (Samuel French)

Spanish

RC Lope de Vega, *The Dog in the Manger* ("The Drama", Victorian edition)

RC Calderon, *Keep Your Own Secret* (Macmillan)

RC Benavente, *The Bonds of Interest* (in "The Drama", No. 20)

Italian

RC Goldoni, *The Fan* (Yale Dramatic Association)

RC *The Beneficent Bear* (Samuel French)

RC *A Curious Mishap* (McClurg)

RCD *The Squabbles of Chioggia* ("The Drama", August, 1914)

R* Giacosa, *The Wager* (Samuel French)

French

C Bruëys (adaptor of 15th century anonymous), *Master Patelin, Solicitor* (Samuel French)

C Molière, *The Merchant Gentleman [Le Bourgeois Gentilhomme]* (Samuel French; Little, Brown; Bohn Library, etc.)

C* *The Affected Young Ladies [Les Précieuses ridicules]*

C *The Sicilian*

C* *Doctor Love [L'Amour Médecin]*

C* *The Doctor in Spite of Himself [Le Médecin malgré lui]*

C *The Imaginary Invalid [Le Malade imaginaire]* (Samuel French; Little, Brown; Bohn Library; Putnam, etc., publish the above five titles)

C* Dancourt, *Woman's Craze for Titles* (in "The Drama"; Historical Publishing Company, 1903, vol. viii.)

C* Le Sage, *Crispin, His Master's Rival* (Samuel French)

CR* Marivaux, *The Legacy* (Samuel French)

CR De Musset, *Fantasio* (Dramatic Publishing Company)

CR* *The Green Coat* (Samuel French)

C Augier, *M. Poirier's Son-in-law [Le Gendre de M. Poirier]* (in "Four Plays by Emile Augier", published by Alfred A. Knopf, and in "Chief European Dramatists", published by Houghton Mifflin)

CR* Banville, *Gringoire* (Dramatic Publishing Company; Samuel French)

CR* *Charming Léandre* (Samuel French)

C Sardou, *A Scrap of Paper [Les Pattes de mouche]* (Samuel French)

CR *The Black Pearl* (Samuel French)

CR* Feuillet, *The Fairy* (Samuel French)

CR* Rivoire, *The Little Shepherdess* (Samuel French)

CR Rostand, *The Romancers* (Samuel French; Walter H. Baker; Heinemann)

C* France, *The Man Who Married a Dumb Wife* (Lane) (F)

C* Picard, *The Rebound* (Samuel French)

CR Zamacois, *The Jesters* (Brentano) (F)

SR* Bouchor, *A Christmas Tale* (Samuel French)

CR* Coppée, *The Violin-Maker of Cremona* (Samuel French)

SR* *Pater Noster* (Samuel French)

SR* Theuriet, *Jean-Marie* (Samuel French)

Danish

C Holberg, *The Loquacious Barber* ("The Drama", Victorian edition)

C *Captain Bombastes Thunderton* (in "Three Comedies by Ludvig Holberg", published by Longmans) (Requires cutting)

CR Hertz, *King René's Daughter* (Samuel French)

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German

CR Lessing, *Minna von Barnhelm* (in Bohn Library, Macmillan)

C *The Scholar* (in Bohn Library)

C Schiller, *Nephew or Uncle* (Walter H. Baker)

English

S Anonymous, *Everyman* (Everyman's Library; Dutton)

R Lyly, *Alexander and Campaspe* (Scribner, and in Everyman's Library) (Requires cutting)

R Greene, *Friar Bacon and Friar Bungay* (Dutton) (Requires cutting)

CR Beaumont and Fletcher, *The Knight of the Burning Pestle* (Scribner; Everyman's Library; etc.) (Requires cutting)

CR Dekker, *Old Fortunatus* (Scribner) (Requires cutting)

CR *The Shoemaker's Holiday* (Scribner; Dutton) (Requires cutting)

CR Heywood *The Fair Maid of the West* (Scribner) (Requires cutting)

SR Jonson, *The Sad Shepherd* (Dutton) (Requires cutting)

CR *The Case is Altered* (in any complete set of Ben Jonson) (Requires cutting)

Shakespeare (no plays need be mentioned. The "Ben Greet Shakespeare for Amateurs" contains good directions for staging and acting)

[pg 11

C Udall, *Ralph Roister Doister* (Macmillan; Dent) (Requires cutting)

CR Goldsmith, *The Good-natured Man* (in any edition of Goldsmith's plays)

CR *She Stoops to Conquer* (in any edition of Goldsmith's plays)

CR Sheridan, *The Rivals* (in any edition of Sheridan's plays)

C *The School for Scandal* (in any edition of Sheridan's plays)

C *The Critic* (in any edition of Sheridan's plays)

CR Pinero, *Trelawney of the 'Wells'* (Dramatic Publishing Company) (F)^[12]

[12] Apply to Sanger & Jordan, 1432 Broadway, New York, for acting rights.

CR Housman, *A Chinese Lantern* (Dramatic Publishing Company) (F)

CR* *Bird in Hand* (Samuel French) (F)

SRD* *A Likely Story* (Samuel French) (F)

CR* *As Good as Gold* (Samuel French) (F)

SRD* *The Snow Man* (Samuel French) (F)

SR* *Nazareth* (Samuel French) (F)

SR* *The Lord of the Harvest* (Samuel French) (F)

SR* *The Return of Alcestis* (Samuel French) (F)

CR (and Barker), *Prunella* (Little, Brown) (F)

CR Shaw, *The Devil's Disciple* (Brentano) (F)^[13]

CR Parker, *Pomander Walk* (Samuel French) (F)

CR* Barrie, *Pantaloon* (Scribner) (F)^[13]

[13] Apply to American Play Company, 33 West 42nd St., New York.

CR Bennett and Knoblauch, *Milestones* (Doran) (F)

CR Noyes, *Sherwood* (Stokes) (F)

CR Tennyson, *The Princess* (in any complete edition of Tennyson)

CR *The Foresters* (in any complete edition of Tennyson)

SR* *The Falcon* (in any complete edition of Tennyson)

R* Lord Dunsany, *The Gods of the Mountain* (Little, Brown) (F)

CR* *The Lost Silk Hat* (Little, Brown) (F)

CRD* *The Glittering Gate* (Little, Brown) (F)

R *King Argimenes and the Unknown Warrior* (Little, Brown) (F)

RS* Yeats, *The Land of Heart's Desire* (Macmillan; Samuel French)

CD* *The Pot of Broth* (Macmillan) (F)^[14]

RS* *Deirdre* (Macmillan) (F)^[14]

RS* *The King's Threshold* (Macmillan) (F)^[14]

[14] Apply to Samuel French, 28 West 38th St., New York.

CRD* Lady Gregory, *The Rising of the Moon* (Putnam) (F)^[15]

CD* *The Workhouse Ward* (Putnam) (F)^[15]

SRD* *The Travelling Man* (Putnam) (F)^[15]

CD* *Spreading the News* (Putnam) (F)^[15]

CD* *The Jackdaw* (Putnam) (F)^[15]

CD* *Hyacinth Halvey* (Putnam) (F)^[15]

SD* Hyde, *The Lost Saint* (Scribner)

SD* *The Twisting of the Rope* (Poet Lore)

CD* Mayne, *The Turn of the Road* (Luce) (F)

CD *The Drone* (Luce) (F)

SD* Synge, *The Shadow of the Glen* (Luce) (F)^[15]

CD Boyle, *The Building Fund* (Gill, Dublin) (F)

RC* Downs, *The Maker of Dreams* (Samuel French) (F)^[15]

Sanskrit

SR Kalidasa, *Sakountala* (Walter Scott, London; and Everyman's Library)

Bengali

RS Tagore, *The Post-Office* (Macmillan) (F)^[15]

[15] Apply to Samuel French, 28 West 38th St., New York.

MODERN PLAYS (NINETEENTH AND TWENTIETH CENTURIES, IN WHICH THE COSTUMES AND SETTINGS ARE MODERN)

Italian

S Giacosa, *As the Leaves* (in "The Drama No. 1, and by Little, Brown)

S *The Stronger* (in "The Drama", May, 1913, and by Little, Brown)

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French

C* Augier, *The Post-Script* (Samuel French, and in "Four Plays by Emile Augier", Alfred A. Knopf)

SC *The House of Fourchambault* (Samuel French, and in "Four Plays by Emile Augier", Alfred A. Knopf)

CR* Meilhac and Halévy, *Indian Summer* (Samuel French)

CR* *Panurge's Sheep* (Samuel French)

CR* Feuillet, *The Village* (Samuel French)

C* Labiche, *The Two Cowards* (Samuel French)

C* *Grammar* (Samuel French)

C Pailleron, *The Art of Being Bored* (Samuel French)

C* Bernard, *French Without a Master* (Samuel French)

C* *I'm Going!* (Samuel French)

C* Donnay, *They!* (In "Lovers, The Free Woman, and They!" (Little, Brown)

S France, *Crainquebille* (Samuel French)

C* Maurey, *Rosalie* (Samuel French)

C* Hervieu, *Modesty* (Samuel French)

S Capus, *The Adventurer* ("The Drama", November, 1914)

C *Brignol and his Daughter* (Samuel French)

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C* Caillavet, *Choosing a Career* (Samuel French)

German

SC Freytag, *The Journalists* ("The Drama", February, 1913)

RC* Sudermann, *The Far-Away Princess* (in "Roses", Scribner, and separately, by Samuel French) (F)

S* *Fritzchen* (in "Morituri", Scribner)

C* Benedix, *The Law-Suit* (Samuel French)

C* *The Third Man* (Samuel French)

C* Gyalui, *After the Honeymoon* (Samuel French)

Scandinavian

S* Strindberg, *The Stronger* (Scribner) (F)

SB *Lucky Pehr* (Stewart and Kidd) (F)

SC Björnson, *The Newly-Married Couple* (Everyman's Library; Dutton)

C *Love and Geography* (Scribner)

S Ibsen, *An Enemy of the People* (Scribner)

Russian

C* Tchekoff, *The Boor* (Samuel French; Scribner)

C* *A Marriage Proposal* (Samuel French; Scribner)

C* *The Tragedian in Spite of Himself* (Scribner)

C* Andreyev, *The Dear Departing* (Henderson, London), and [same play] *Love of One's Neighbor* (Boni, New York)

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English

C Pinero, *The Schoolmistress* (Walter H. Baker) (F)

C *The Magistrate* (Walter H. Baker) (F)

CS *The Benefit of the Doubt* (Dramatic Publishing Company) (F)

C *The Amazons* (Walter H. Baker) (F)

C *Dandy Dick* (Walter H. Baker) (F)

C Jones, *The Manœuvres of Jane* (Samuel French) (F)

CS *The Liars* (Samuel French) (F)

C *Dolly Reforming Herself* (Samuel French) (F)

C Wilde, *The Importance of Being Earnest* (Walter H. Baker; Nichols; Luce; Putnam; and French)^[16]

C* Sutro, *The Bracelet* (Samuel French; Brentano) (F—Samuel French)

C* Sutro, *The Man on the Kerb* (Samuel French; Brentano) (F—Samuel French)

C* *A Marriage Has Been Arranged* (Samuel French; Brentano) (F—Samuel French)

CR* Barrie, *The Will* (Scribner) (F)^[16]

CR* *The Twelve-Pound Look* (Brentano) (F)^[16]

[16] Apply to Sanger & Jordan.

CR *The Admirable Crichton* (Doran) (F)^[17]

CR *Quality Street* (Doran) (F)^[17]

[17] Apply to Sanger & Jordan.

C Shaw, *You Never Can Tell* (Brentano) (F)^[18]

CR *Candida* (Brentano) (F)^[18]

C* *Press Cuttings* (Brentano) (F)^[18]

C* *How He Lied to Her Husband* (Brentano) (F)^[18]

CR *Arms and the Man* (Brentano) (F)^[18]

[18] Apply to American Play Co.

s Barker, *The Voyage Inheritance* (Little, Brown) (F)

SC Bennett, *What the Public Wants* (Doran) (F)

RC *Milestones* (Doran) (F)

S *Cupid and Commonsense* (Doran) (F)

C *The Great Adventure* (Doran) (F)

C* *Polite Farces* (Doran) (F)

S Baker, *Chains* (Luce) (F)

S* Gibson, *Mates* (Macmillan) (F)

S* *On the Road* (Macmillan) (F)

C Hankin, *The Cassilis Engagement* (Samuel French) (F)

C *The Return of the Prodigal* (Samuel French) (F)

C *The Charity that Began at Home* (Samuel French) (F)

C* Houghton, *The Dear Departed* (Samuel French) (F)

C* *The Fifth Commandment* (Samuel French) (F)

C* *Phipps* (Samuel French) (F)

SC Houghton, *Independent Means* (Samuel French) (F)

S Galsworthy, *The Silver Box* (Scribner) (F)^[19]

C *Joy* (Scribner) (F)^[19]

SC Hamilton, *Just to Get Married* (Samuel French) (F)

SC* Chapin, *Augustus in Search of a Father* (Gowans and Grey, London) (F)

DCR* Brighouse, *Lonesome Like* (Samuel French) (F)

SD* *The Price of Coal* (Samuel French) (F)

C Monkhouse, *The Education of Mr. Surrage* (Sidgwick and Jackson, London) (F)

C Mason, *Green Stockings* (Samuel French) (F)

SD Ervine, *Jane Clegg* (Holt) (F)

DCR* Fenn and Pryce, *'Op o' me Thumb* (Samuel French) (F)

American

S Gillette, *Secret Service* (Samuel French) (F)

S *Held by the Enemy* (Samuel French) (F)

C *Too Much Johnson* (Samuel French) (F)

C MacKaye, *Anti-Matrimony* (Stokes) (F)

C Thomas (A. E.), *Her Husband's Wife* (Doubleday, Page) (F)^[19]

[19] Apply to Samuel French for producing rights.

S* Middleton, *The Failures* (Holt) (F)^[20]

S* *The Groove* (Holt) (F)^[20]

S* *Tradition* (Holt) (F)^[20]

[20] Apply to Samuel French for producing rights.

C* Macmillan, *Short Plays* (Stewart and Kidd) (F)

C Forbes, *The Commuters* (Samuel French) (F)

C *The Traveling Salesman* (Samuel French) (F)

S Klein, *The Lion and the Mouse* (Samuel French) (F)

R Thomas, *Arizona* (Dramatic Publishing Company) (F)

RD *Alabama* (Dramatic Publishing Company) (F)

C *Mrs. Leffingwell's Boots* (Samuel French) (F)

C *The Other Girl* (Samuel French) (F)

C *Oliver Goldsmith* (Samuel French) (F)

C *The Earl of Pawtucket* (Samuel French) (F)

C *The Capitol* (Samuel French) (F)

COLLECTED VOLUME OF PLAYS

1. *Representative One-Act Plays by American Authors*, edited by Margaret G. Mayorga (Little, Brown), contains a large number of suitable plays for amateurs. Among these are: [pg 125]

R* *Sam Average*, by Percy MacKaye (F)

R* *Six Who Pass While the Lentils Boil*, by Stuart Walker (F)

S* *In the Zone*, by Eugene O'Neill (F)

R* *The Wonder Hat*, a Harlequinade by Ben Hecht and Kenneth Sawyer Goodman (F)

C* *Suppressed Desires*, by George Cram Cook and Susan Glaspell (F)

S* *The Last Straw*, by Bosworth Crocker (F)

2. *Representative One-Act Plays by British and Irish Authors*, edited by Barrett H. Clark (Little, Brown), contains, among others, the following plays suited to the requirements of amateurs:

R* *The Widow of Wasdale Head*, by Arthur Pinero (F)

C* *Rococo*, by Granville Barker (F)

R* *The Snow Man*, by Lawrence Housman (F)

C* *Fancy Free*, by Stanley Houghton (F)

3. *Fifty Contemporary One-Act Plays*, edited by Frank Shay and Pierre Loving (Stewart-Kidd), includes the following plays for amateurs:

C* *Literature*, by Arthur Schnitzler (F)

C* *Françoise' Luck*, by Georges de Porto-Riche (F)

S* *Mary's Wedding*, by Gilbert Carman (F)

C* *A Sunny Morning*, by the Quinteros (F)

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX I

COPYRIGHT AND ROYALTY

THE following statement regarding royalties on amateur plays was prepared by Mr. Allen J. Carter, an attorney of Chicago, for one of the Drama League pamphlets listing amateur plays:

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"A play which has never been published nor offered for sale, and which exists only in manuscript form, may be copyrighted upon proper entry being made at the copyright office in Washington, D.C. Should such play be later published, however, the publication must comply with all the requirements of the law as to notice of copyright.

"Any person who infringes the copyright in any play shall be liable: (a) To an injunction restraining said infringement; (b) to pay actual damages to the copyright proprietor, or in place of actual damages \$100.00 for the first infringing performance and \$50.00 for each succeeding one; (c) to imprisonment not to exceed one year, or to a fine not to exceed \$1,000.00, or both, wherever such person has infringed such copyright wilfully and for profit.

"It follows, therefore, that if any group of amateurs perform a copyrighted play without having obtained the consent of the author or copyright proprietor, they are collectively liable to damages of at least \$100.00 under whatever conditions the performance is given. If they do it wilfully and for profit, they are in addition each individually liable to fine and imprisonment under the criminal provision of the act."

APPENDIX II

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A NOTE ON MAKE-UP

MAKE-UP as an art and a science does not properly fall within the scope of the present volume. However, it has been thought advisable to insert at this place sections from an interesting paper on make-up by one who has made a thorough study of the subject. The author acknowledges his obligation to Miss Grace Griswold, who wrote the article, for permission to make this use of it.

*How and Where Lines Come
into the Face
A Study in Make-up
by
Grace Griswold*

Nearly all great actors are masters of make-up. They must be, for the illusions of the stage are no less pictorial than those of painting and sculpture, with the added elements of movement and voice, all of which must be brought into working harmony with the thought and feeling of the part, in a perfect portrayal. Any serious incongruity in externals is felt at once, and destroys the illusion.

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Women have not done as much as men in facial transformation, except in the way of burlesque and grotesquerie. Women's make-ups, on the whole, are far more conventional. The female face is more difficult to change without revealing the tricks. Heavy furrows and deep coloring are possible only for low types. Men can effect great changes by the use of beards and moustaches. A woman's art must be far subtler.

Look at the men across the way.^[21] Notice their eyes. We always see the eyes first, although the mouth is a more unerring key to character. The mouth for emotions and impulses, and the eyes for thoughts. As the mouth is the gateway of the soul, so the eyes are its windows, but, like all windows, their function is rather to give light and view to the interior than to expose it to the impertinence of passers-by.... His level brows, which show him to be of a practical or scientific turn of mind, are deeply contracted. So much so, that not only are there two perpendicular lines between them, but one across the top of the nose as well. The heavy bone formation which the brows outline, indicates rare powers of observation. But this man has come a cropper. See how restless and unseeing are his eyes! He is searching for a solution to the problem which is troubling him. It is a purely intellectual problem, for the mouth, which is the indication of the emotions and passions, is unaffected by what is going on above. There is nothing sinister about the problem: you see that the eyes are wide open. Now it is settled, because he appears focussed: he is following a single line of thought.

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[21] It was imperative that the long article be abridged. The reference here is to Miss Griswold's first sentence: "... take a ride with me in the subway, where we may perhaps glean some impressions for character portrayal upon the stage."

Now observe the man on the right. He too is thinking hard, but his mouth is drawn, jaws set, eyelids puckered to a mere slit. He has been wronged, or believes he has, and is planning retaliation. His nostrils are dilated, his breathing heavy. Both these men are laboring under excitement, but we cannot read their natures, because their habitual expression is distorted.

Do you see that dear soul opposite? There is work behind that face, work that has brought with it health. There has been good living, but no intemperance. See the strong muscles and the glow in

the cheeks, with their Santa Claus rotundity. There is passion, too, but it is restrained: the lips are full, but the center line is straight. With less control, that line would tend to sag. Melancholia is also indicated in downward lines. In the case of this woman, the lip is perhaps too heavy to show delicacy of character, but it shows broad sympathy, and is redeemed by its upper consort, which reveals, except at the corners, a cupid's bow, full of tenderness. The Venus de Milo hardly escapes censure even with the lateral shortness of the lower lip and the softened outlines of the upper. This woman's mouth is larger, denoting generosity. Now look at the eyes—open just to the degree of frankness, but not of insincerity, like those of the vapid young person across the way. There are radiations from the corners, too: the footprints of many a pleasant smile. The eyebrows have the sympathetic upward sweep toward the nose, and there is a whimsical twist of the left eyebrow. Altogether, a pleasant countenance.

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A perfectly straight compressed mouth always implies strength of will.

Now notice the woman just beyond with her high-bred aristocratic face. The "executive" nose, with its delicate arch, are especially indicative of her character. The eyebrows likewise are arched, over a full forehead; very imaginative. The eyes, slightly veiled in their expression, show her to be plunged in deep and somewhat troubled thought. Her eyes are veiled because she does not see clearly a way out of her problem, but that way out will be, we are sure, something noble. Her problem is not so exclusively an intellectual one as that of the man we mentioned: it must be some economic or philanthropical question—her chin is finely chiselled and held with exquisite poise, strong and at the same time delicate. Her complexion has the "pale cast of thought", but is not unhealthy however. The flesh lies easily upon its firm base. It will never warp into deep furrows. See, now she has solved or put aside her problem, for a moment, and her eyes are open and clear, and her smile, as she recognizes a friend, is engaging and unaffected. Her sympathies are less personal, more detached, but none the less real, than other women's.

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And now see this man who has just entered. He, too, is an aristocrat, but as he turns, we can observe that there is a one-sided twist to his face. The bone formation in his face is similar to that of the woman's, but his expression is exaggerated by a muscular habit of the mouth, possibly occasioned by the loss of teeth. His eyes are open, but they express impassive coldness. He has taken life with a sneer. His brows are not arched, although one of them is artificially raised: the result, undoubtedly, of boredom.

Habitual good-humor ages the face in a pleasant manner. It is the only thing that never grows old: do you remember what genial sparkling eyes Joseph Jefferson and Mark Twain had?

Bearing in mind these summary character studies, let us turn to the more practical side of make-up:

Regarding *straight* make-up—*i.e.* make-up which is designed to offset the glare of the lights—it can safely be asserted that most professionals make-up too heavily. This is partially due to the fact that the lights in the dressing-room are seldom of like intensity or kind as those on the stage. Billie Burke and Blanche Ring occur to us as having achieved happy results in making-up, the former with a rose-bud prettiness of white and pink, the latter by using so little color and blending that little so well that it is scarcely perceivable. Both these actresses use very little rouge on the upper eyelids, an excess of which is one of the commonest faults. The only purpose it can serve is to soften the upward and whitening glare of the footlights. The skilful use of rouge is the most important and least understood of all the numerous elements of this art. First as to shade, most of the rouge used is blue. It does not blend with most powders, but produces a hard contrast, and appears unnatural. The placing of the rouge, too, is very important in obviating natural defects of proportion in the features, which distances always intensify. Any spot left white is projected as if with a high-light. If the nose is too wide, it can be narrowed by shading the rouge up to its center line. If it is too prominent, it will be less apparent if shaded slightly all over. The same rule applies to the chin, the jaw, the ears, and the forehead. Some people lay in a general foundation of grease rouge before putting anything else on, but this is likely to give a muddy effect. If used only on the cheeks, with the dry rouge over all for shading, the effect is far more natural. Some also lay in a foundation of pink paste—called "Exora"—but the result is nearly always pasty, and should never be used except to cover some blotchiness. The lighter the make-up, the greater opportunity will there be for mobility of expression.

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The same moderation should be exercised in making up the eyes and mouth. Brown on the lashes and eyebrows is softer than black, especially for blondes. Heavy black leading above and below, accentuated by broad shadows on the lids of dark blue, make them look like burnt holes a short distance away. Few eyes are large enough to stand it, and those that are, do not require it. A little light or dark blue close to the lashes of the upper lid is necessary, but very few eyes need any make-up at all on the lower lid, except a faint shadow, perhaps, of light blue. A little dab of lip rouge in the inner corners of the eye adds an effect of brilliancy. If the eye itself slants, it can be straightened by a line of brown or black, drawn in the opposite direction, and beginning just inside the outer corners. The line of the upper lids and the eyebrows should be extended in almost every case, to give an effect of breadth to the eyes.

If the face needs lengthening and the eyebrows are not too heavy, they can be covered with flesh-colored grease paint, and another pair painted above them. There is danger in this, however,

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of opening the frame of the eyes too much and giving them a foolish expression. The arched brow tends to elongate, the level, broad effect to shorten, the face.

The mouth also needs careful treatment. As to color: the dark red rouge so often used gives the appearance of a bloody gash. The English hunting red, a sort of bluish vermilion, is best, because most natural. Only the very smallest mouths can stand being made up to the corners, because in smiling, the mouth stretches, and will look too large if deeply colored all the way across.

A line of white grease paint drawn down the bridge of the nose will straighten it; or, if it be too small, lengthen it. The nose may also be completely transformed by putty.

This brings us to what is known as the "character" make-up. Here again one is confronted by numberless problems regarding the use of colors. At best, character make-up is only the adjustment of one physiognomy to the habitual expression of another: complete transformation is out of the question. Nevertheless, the human face, being mobile, may assume expressions which are not habitual to it. However, it must be borne in mind that to superimpose a purely imaginary countenance over a natural one, regardless of what that natural one is, is a fatal mistake, because when the natural face attempts to express itself under the other, the effect will be lost.

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To return a moment to the problem of color: illusion is frequently lost through a failure to adjust the shade of the high-light and shadow to the tone of the foundation grease paint, or natural complexion. The commonest offence is the use of an unmixed, unblended slate for shadows, and white, and high-lights, whether the underlying color be florid, sallow, pink, or pale flesh. The result of such treatment is merely paint.

The whole art of making-up is still hide-bound by tradition, because of stupid ideals which persist in the minds of those whose business it is to direct, as well as many in the acting profession itself.

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Throughout the dialogues, there were words used to mimic accents of the speakers. Those words were retained as-is.

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On page 115, "Minna Von Barnhelm" was replaced with "Minna von Barnhelm".

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