

# Instructor's Resource Manual

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## The Art of Theatre Then and Now and Concise

**THIRD EDITION**

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# Instructor's Resource Manual

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# The Art of the Theatre

## INSTRUCTOR'S RESOURCE MANUAL

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# The Art of the Theatre

## INTRODUCTION

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I have taught Introduction to Theatre to over fifteen thousand students. Today it is arguably one of the most popular classes on campus, but that was not always the case. Twenty years ago I was forced to teach the class because I was a first year non-tenured professor and I wasn't in a position to say no. I did not relish the prospect. How could I make a bunch of biology and math majors interested in the art of theatre? In addition, the idea of teaching theatre appreciation seemed quite absurd -- it made about as much sense to me as a tennis appreciation class where no one is given rackets. In the smaller classes during the summer I could get the students up on their feet, but during the regular school year I faced hundreds of students in each class. It seemed an impossible assignment and failure seemed inevitable.

It is now two decades later, I'm a full professor, and even though I've had plenty of opportunities to pass the class off to newer non-tenured professors I still teach Introduction to Theatre to over 400 students every semester. In fact, it is my favorite class. Why? Because this bread and butter class is how our department trains a new generation of theatergoers and art-lovers. When I lecture I am reaching out to a new audience and igniting a fire in the minds of students, many of whom have never before been exposed to serious art of any kind, let alone the living stage.

My advice is to emphasize those parts of the theatre in which *you* are an expert, to fill the lectures with plenty of personal experiences, and to never steer away from controversial issues. I've always included lectures on Serrano, Mapplethorpe, Findlay and the National Endowment for the Arts. I get the students discussing censorship, copyrights and government funding of the arts. I lead a debate on the definition of obscenity. I tie lectures on acting into how they can be a better actor in every day situations. When I lecture on theatre history I apply it to the present. I even spend a full week on creativity and how the student can be more imaginative. I have found that today's students are eager for honest, in depth, thoughtful lectures, discussions, and debates about our chosen art form.

I hope these notes, test questions, and ideas help you get your class off to a good start. And I hope that you too will come to find that Introduction to Theatre is perhaps one of the most important classes your department offers.

*William Missouri Downs*

## **PLEASE CONTACT US IF YOU NEED HELP**

Thank you for using *Art of Theatre*. Should you need help teaching Introduction to Theatre or have any suggestions on how we can improve the book please feel free to contact me. I sincerely invite you to drop a line and let us know how our text works for you.

William Missouri Downs, University of Wyoming  
(downs@uwyo.edu)

## **WHAT IS IN THIS MANUAL**

We hope that this manual will be helpful to both beginning instructors and seasoned professors. We've enclosed several sections for each chapter. Here is a breakdown:

**KEY TERMS AND PEOPLE**—A detailed list of the key terms and people referred to in this the chapter. This list allows you to quickly scan the terms in the students' assigned reading so that you can lecture on similar or related topics.

**CHAPTER OUTLINE**—A detailed outline of the chapter.

**DISCUSSION, DEBATE & EXERCISES**—It's important to get the class talking and thinking about the theatre and art. In this section we provide a few ideas that might help you start a lecture, class discussion or debate. In other chapters we include exercises to help the students understand artists and ideas.

**SUGGESTIONS FOR SHORT PAPERS**—This section provides a few ideas for writing assignments.

**MULTIPLE CHOICE QUESTIONS**—Multiple choice questions for each chapter.

**SHORT ANSWER QUESTIONS**—Short answer questions for each chapter.

**ESSAY QUESTIONS**—Essay questions for each chapter.

## **SOME THOUGHTS ON TEACHING HISTORY**

Our attempt is to present theatre history and the ideas that inspired it in their historical context. It is often said that theatre reflects society that there is an



umbilical connection between what is happening on the stage and what is happening in the real world at a given point in time. As Jacques Barzun says in his wonderful book *From Dawn to Decadence*, “It is taken for granted that a work reveals the artist’s soul as well as his mind. But what is more important, the work of art must by its order mirror the hierarchical order of the world, which is a moral order. Whether by intuition or by convention, the artist must know how to convey his reality.”<sup>1</sup> The artist’s reality may not reflect all of society, but it certainly reveals the social benchmarks of a particular culture.

Theatre does not occur in a void so in order to understand theatre history, it’s necessary to spend a great deal of time exploring the cultural, historical, religious, and philosophical developments that caused, repressed, stimulated, restricted, created, destroyed, and time and again renewed theatre through the centuries. As the great theatre designer Robert Edmond Jones said, “The theatre of every age has something to teach us, if we are sensitive enough and humble enough to learn from it.”<sup>2</sup> Those who have even a casual education in theatre history can tune into a skit on *Saturday Night Live* and see more than a comic program that originated thirty-something years ago; they also see a form of entertainment that dates back some 2,500 years. When the theatre literate read a complaint over the staging of a controversial play, they see more than “a sign of the times,” they also recognize one step in a struggle that has pitted organized religion against artists for millennia; they know that countless modern movies are based on plots that have been borrowed, reworked, retold and presented as original. Each generation thinks itself unique and advanced when compared to its predecessor, yet we have so much in common with the past, and the same struggles have occurred time and again. Perhaps if we knew this, we wouldn’t feel so alone or misunderstood.

### **DO YOU HAVE A GREAT PHOTO?**

If you have a perfect photo that we could use in the next edition of the *Art of Theatre* please contact William Missouri Downs ([downs@uwyo.edu](mailto:downs@uwyo.edu)). We would love to consider it.

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<sup>1</sup> Jacques Barzun, *From Dawn To Decadence*, pg. 67.

<sup>2</sup> Robert Edmund Jones, *Dramatic Imagination*, pg. 45.

# The Art of the Theatre

## CHAPTER 1 THEATRE, ART, AND ENTERTAINMENT

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### KEY TERMS AND PEOPLE

Aesthetics  
Aristotle  
Brook, Peter  
Commercial  
Theatre  
Cultural Theatre  
Drama vs. Theatre  
Experimental  
Plays  
Havel, Václav  
Historical Theatre  
Jones, Robert  
Edmond  
Literary Arts  
Performing Art  
Picasso, Pablo  
Pictorial Arts  
Plato  
Political Theatre  
Rand, Ayn  
Spatial Arts  
Subject &  
Medium

## CHAPTER OUTLINE

- 1) Theatre, Art, and Entertainment
  - a) The uncommon metro station performance of Joshua Bell
  - b) Great art is no longer a once in a lifetime experience
  - c) The true value of art is not its price tag, but its ability to make us feel and think.
  
- 2) Art, or Not Art: That Is The Question
  - a) How the word art appears in everyday conversation.
    - i) Skill
      - (1) Derives from the Latin word *ars*
      - (2) Synonymous with the ancient Greek word *technē*, which means “skill” or “technique.”
    - ii) Beauty
      - (1) Aesthetics is the branch of philosophy that deals with the nature and expression of beauty.
      - (2) But is all art beautiful?
    - iii) Meaning
      - (1) When the word art is used in this way, the implicit meaning is “this is life as I, the artist, see it. This is my personal take on things.”
      - (2) Artists in search of meaning may choose to ignore, intend of challenge, or utterly defy traditional social values and disregard common standards of technique and beauty.
      - (3) This also means that a work of art that may be made with little skill, contain little beauty, and be unpleasant is sometimes hard to comprehend.
    - iv) What should art do?
      - (1) Is art only a thing of beauty and pleasure?
      - (2) Is art a tool to educate?
      - (3) Is art designed to inform, influence, and incite?
      - (4) All of the above?
  
- 3) Plato, Aristotle, and Theatre Arts
  - a) Plato
    - i) Accused theatre people of promoting "vice and wickedness.”
    - ii) Said that that people forget themselves and are highly manipulated, even irrational, when under the influence of the arts.
    - iii) Said that art must be subservient to the state and to society
    - iv) Advocated banning plays that did not promote the well-being of the body politic
    - v) Called for censorship because people are imitative animals and tend to become what they imitate.
    - vi) Called for only suitable role models on stage.
    - vii) Blaise Pascal (1623-1662) disliked the theatre because he felt that the audience members’ conscience stop functioning during performances.

- viii) Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712 – 1778) said that the arts spread flowers over the chains that blind people, smothering their desire for liberty."
- b) Aristotle
- i) Disagreed with his mentor.
  - ii) Felt art and theatre awakened the soul.
  - iii) Believed that good theatre fortifies us because it allows us to release repressed emotions in a controlled, therapeutic way.
  - iv) Held that art does not slavishly copy nature but instead clarifies, abstracts, interprets, and idealizes it.
  - v) Said that art depicts the universal character of things and includes the lessons the artist has learned by living and observing nature.
  - vi) Nature, according to Aristotle, tends towards perfection but doesn't always attain it. We therefore need things like art and theatre to correct the deficiencies of nature by clarifying, interpreting, and idealizing life.
- 4) The Qualities of Art
- a) Defining the word "art" is difficult but defining any word is difficult.
  - b) Ludwig Wittgenstein says we should define by pointing out family resemblance. The family resemblances of the word art are:
    - i) Art Is A Form Of Human Expression
      - (1) Only human beings can make art
      - (2) Art springs from the same root as the word artificial.
      - (3) It is not the real thing but a human copy
    - ii) Art Consists of a Subject and a Medium
      - (1) The subject of the work is what that work is about.
      - (2) The medium is the method, substance, and technique used to create the work.
      - (3) Every type of art has a different medium that defines it and makes it unique.
        - (a) Spatial arts
        - (b) Pictorial arts
        - (c) Literary arts
        - (d) Performing art
    - iii) Art Makes You Feel Something
      - (1) Art does not come to life until a spectator, a listener, an audience, a crowd or an individual breathes life into it by experience
      - (2) Harold Taylor (1914–1993) said that man must know how to "respond to other people and other ideas, different from his own, rather than reacting against them."
    - iv) Art Provides the Perception of Order
      - (1) Art attempts to give structure, a meaningful form or order
      - (2) "It is the function of all art to give us some perception of an order in life, by imposing order upon it," said the poet T.S. Eliot
      - (3) Structure of form reflects human intelligence and our ability to create order.
      - (4) In theatre, structure can refer to how a drama fits together as a recognizable progression of events through the arrangement and interconnection of story and character.
      - (5) Art emphasizes certain parts of life and de-emphasizes others
      - (6) Does art imitate life or is it based on the artist's opinion and interpretation?

- 5) To Be an Artist Means Finding Form and Structure
  - a) Our need for form and structure is really the need to simplify
  - b) Humans need structure and theme because the world in which we find ourselves appears to be disorganized or at least lacking in purposeful design
  - c) Art, along with science and religion, helps us find structure; with structure comes meaning.
  
- 6) Artists Are Political (the good, the bad, and the ugly)
  - a) When artist select and arrange, they express a value judgment and reveal their beliefs.
  - b) Art is like politics in the broad sense in that it reflects people's conflicting ideas about how we should live, how society should be organized, and how the world functions.
  - c) The artists' fundamental views of life are embodied within their art.
  - d) Artists states their opinions about life
  - e) They make value judgments
  - f) They reveal their dominant philosophy of life.
  - g) They select those aspects of existence they believe are significant, isolate them, and stress them to create meaning.
  - h) Their fundamental views of life are embodied within their art.
  - i) Artists are often involved in politics

- i) Many artists espouse political causes, actively support political candidates, state their political opinions publicly, or create art about specific political ideas.
  - (1) Clash and *Rage Against the Machine*
  - (2) *Dixie Chicks*
  - (3) Athol Fugard
  - (4) Arnold Schwarzenegger
  - (5) Vigdis Finnbogadottir
  - (6) Václav Havel
  - (7) Sonny Bono
  - (8) Fred Grandy
  - (9) Ben Jones
  - (10) Ronald Reagan
  - (11) Theo van Gogh
  - (12) Ken Saro-Wiwa
  
- 7) The life and death of Ken Saro-Wiwa
  - a) Playwright and author of children's books
  - b) An outspoken critic of:
    - i) Nigerian government
    - ii) Environmental pollution
    - iii) The unfair business practices of Shell Oil Company
  - c) Organized peaceful protests, wrote pamphlets on minority and environmental rights, and launched the grassroots community-based political movements
  - d) Brought up on trumped up murder charges and despite international protests, eight days later he was executed
  
- 8) What is Theatre? Or is it Drama?
  - a) Theatre is the only art for which the medium and subject are exactly the same.
  - b) Theatre comes from Theatron = "seeing place."
  - c) Drama comes from "dromenon" = "to take action, to do, to make, or to accomplish."
  - d) The Empty Space by Peter Brook states that all that is needed for theatre to occur is an empty space and someone to walk across that space while someone else watches.
  - e) Drama is a form of theatre that tells a story about people, their actions, and the conflicts that result.
  - f) Theatre is about conflict
  - g) Theatre is always live
  - h) Drama and theatre are always about human beings
  - i) Theatre often require more than one type of art and artist
  
- 9) The Roles Theatre Plays in Society
  - a) Commercial theatre
    - i) Politically safe themes
    - ii) Entertainment designed to appeal to a majority of the general public
  - b) Historical theatre
    - i) Plays of a particular historical period
    - ii) Still relevant themes

- c) Political theatre
  - i) Themes that are seldom heard in the mainstream media or in commercial theatre
  - ii) Propaganda plays
- d) Experimental theatre
  - i) New staging techniques
  - ii) May questioning the nature of theatre itself
- e) Cultural theatre
  - i) Is designed to support the heritage, customs, and point of view of a particular people, religion, class, country, or community
  - ii) May reinforce your own culture

#### 10) Art versus Entertainment

- a) Entertainment
  - i) Generally shows us an agreeable mirror of ourselves and our ideas
  - ii) Entertainment fulfills our expectations
  - iii) Contains safe themes
- b) Art
  - i) Art doesn't seek to confirm society's values
  - ii) Often solicits change
- c) A work can also be both art and entertainment.
- d) But what happens when we indulge in a diet dominated by entertainment?

#### 11) The difference Between Art & Entertainment

- a) Art
  - i) Lets us stand outside ourselves and see the world from another's point of view
  - ii) Is directed toward the individual
  - iii) Makes us think
  - iv) Is about education
  - v) Demands an intellectual effort to appreciate it
  - vi) Requires active viewing
  - vii) Is about self-examination. As Socrates said, "the unexamined life is not worth living"
  - viii) Takes time to contemplate
  - ix) Has great potential as an agent of social change
  - x) Challenges the audience
  - xi) Is about edification, transcendence, and contemplation
  - xii) Does not compromise for public taste
- b) Entertainment
  - i) Pulls us into ourselves and reaffirms our point of view
  - ii) Is directed toward the largest possible number
  - iii) Makes us think we're thinking
  - iv) Is about sameness
  - v) Makes no intellectual or other demands on the viewer
  - vi) Can be done with passive viewing. It is audience-friendly
  - vii) May examine life but it does not lead to criticism
  - viii) Is easily digested
  - ix) Has little potential as an agent of social change

- x) Flatters the audience
- xi) Is about gratification, indulgence, and escape
- xii) Always takes into account public tastes

## 12) Curtain Call

- a) Why do we need art?
- b) Art helps us to see life differently
- c) Art allows us to expand our experience, intensify our perceptions, challenge conventional wisdom, and introduce another frame of reference

## DISCUSSION AND DEBATE

- **Next to politics and religion there is no single subject that is apt to arouse more disagreement and a livelier class debate than the answer to the question: What is art?**

For a discussion prompt, note that the *American Heritage Dictionary* says art is “a human effort to imitate, supplement, alter, or counteract the work of nature.” *Webster’s Deluxe Unabridged Dictionary* says that art is “the disposition or modification of things by human skill...” Note the key word in common to the definitions: human. We’ve all heard of people putting paintbrushes in the trunks of elephants or in the hands of monkeys and letting the creatures splash paint all over a canvas. Is this art?

- **Should art educate, inform, influence, and incite, or should it be an object of pleasure, or both?**
- **Can there be too much entertainment? What happens to a society when it is constantly entertained?**
- **What types of entertainments dominate our culture? What do our entertainments say about us?**

Our entertainment reflects our culture. The French Philosopher Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712-1778) said, “An intrepid, grave and cruel people want deadly and perilous festivals in which valor and composure shine. A ferocious and intense people want blood, combat, and terrible passions. A voluptuous people want music and dances. A gallant people want love and civility. A frivolous people want joking and ridicule...” But the one thing all people share in common is that they want their entertainment to reaffirm their values.

There is nothing wrong with being entertained, but never before in the history of the earth has there been so much entertainment concentrated in a single population. What happens when a society has so much entertainment? When entertainment invades every aspect of our lives? What happens when our values are constantly reinforced? When even our religious television programming looks more like the Tonight Show than a church program or when we have teachers asking how can



we make learning more “fun”? That usually means creating more comfortable, less challenging environments, says Mark Edmundson, an English professor at the University of Virginia, by creating “places where almost no one failed, everything was enjoyable, and everyone was nice.”<sup>3</sup> North America produces more entertainment than anywhere else on earth; as a result some feel we live in a therapeutic culture where everything is entertainment and therefore restorative, reaffirming, and unchallenging.

- **Ask your students to discuss the following differences between art and entertainment. You should also ask them if they agree or disagree with the differences and why or why not.**
  - Art lets us stand outside ourselves and see the world from another’s point of view.
  - Entertainment pulls us into ourselves and reaffirms our point of view.
  
  - Art is directed toward the individual.
  - Entertainment is directed toward the largest possible number.
  
  - Art makes us think.
  - Entertainment makes us think we’re thinking.
  
  - Art demands an intellectual effort to appreciate.
  - Entertainment makes no intellectual or other demands on the viewer.
  
  - Art requires active viewing.
  - Entertainment can be done with passive viewing: It is audience-friendly.
  
  - Art is about self-examination.
  - Entertainment may examine life but it does not lead to criticism.
  
  - Art has great potential as an agent of social change.
  - Entertainment has little potential as an agent of social change.
  
  - Art challenges the audience.
  - Entertainment flatters the audience.

## SUGGESTION FOR SHORT PAPERS

- **Have the class write a short paper where they argue a case for Plato or Aristotle’s opinion of art.**

Should art educate, inform, influence, and incite, or should it be simply an object of entertainment and beauty? Plato didn’t like the theatre. In his book *The Republic* he warns that people forget themselves and are highly manipulated, even

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<sup>3</sup> Life The Movie Page 139

irrational, when under the influence of the theatre. He felt that the danger of the arts is its power to instill values hostile to the community, so he banished the poet (by which he meant “playwright” but the word did not yet exist) from the ideal state in order to protect citizens from what can happen when they become spellbound. He said, “The poet is a sophist, a maker of counterfeits that look like the truth.” Plato’s student Aristotle disagreed with his mentor. He felt that, rather than just stirring undesirable passions, art and theatre awakes the soul. Instead of putting us at the mercy of our baser instincts, Aristotle believed that good theatre actually fortifies us because it releases repressed emotions and that these releases can be therapeutic. Aristotle said that our need for theatre could be traced back to two things: First, we get pleasure when we recognize our likeness. Whether watching ourselves in a mirror or actors on stage, we enjoy watching our kind. And second, which is closely tied to the first, is our love of imitation.

- **Have the class write a short paper about their favorite TV show or movie explaining why that show reaffirms their values.**

“How does my favorite TV show or movie reaffirm my values?” For example, a student might pick the sitcom *Will and Grace* which may well appear to challenge American values. However, as Caryn James recently pointed out in the *New York Times*, “The show’s popular success tells us that Americans will watch the story of a gay man and his female best friend. But *Will and Grace* also hints (here is its nasty secret) that it is safe to create a stereotypical flouncing gay man in Jack, who can reassure viewers that their prejudices are true.”<sup>4</sup> This can be a very difficult paper to write, for students must analyze the show and their society.

## MULTIPLE CHOICE QUESTIONS

- 1) This branch of philosophy deals with the nature and expression of beauty.
  - a) Metaphysics
  - b) Ethics
  - c) Politics
  - d) Aesthetics
  - e) Epistemology

**Answer: d**

- 2) When the word *art* appears in everyday conversation, it is used in a wide array of contexts but generally conveys three main ideas. Which of the following is **not** one of the three?
  - a) Sophistication
  - b) Skill
  - c) Beauty
  - d) Meaning

**Answer: a**

- 3) This ancient philosopher accused theatre people of promoting vice and wickedness and of being largely responsible for the corruption of his day.

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<sup>4</sup> *New York Times* Oct. 1<sup>st</sup>. 2000

- a) Epictetus
- b) Plato
- c) Archimedes
- d) Aristotle
- e) Confucius

**Answer: b**

4) This ancient philosopher believed that good theatre fortifies us because it allows us to release repressed emotions in a controlled, therapeutic way.

- a) Epictetus
- b) Plato
- c) Archimedes
- d) Aristotle
- e) Confucius

**Answer: d**

5) Which of the following is **not** one of the five basic elements that all art has to a certain extent?

- a) A form of human expression
- b) Values
- c) Subject and Medium
- d) Reaction
- e) A perception of Order

**Answer: b**

6) Its purpose is to reaffirm the audience's values and confirm their established belief systems.

- a) Science
- b) Literature
- c) Art
- d) Entertainment
- e) University

**Answer: d**

7) This type of art is created by manipulating material in space and includes sculpture, pottery, and architecture.

- a) Spatial art
- b) Graphic art
- c) Literary art
- d) Performing art
- e) Visual art

**Answer: a**

8) This type of art is illustrative and includes drawing and painting.

- a) Spatial art
- b) Graphic art
- c) Literary art

- d) Performing art
- e) Visual art

**Answer: b**

9) Theatre is classified as which type of art?

- a) Spatial art
- b) Graphic art
- c) Literary art
- d) Performing art
- e) Visual art

**Answer: d**

10) Entertainment generally shows us an agreeable mirror of ourselves and our ideas about how the world is or should be.

- a) True
- b) False

**Answer: a**

### SHORT ANSWER QUESTIONS

1) In his book The Empty Space, English director Peter Brook states that all that is needed for theatre to occur is an empty space and someone to walk across that space while someone else does what?

**Answer: Watches**

2) Whether explicit or implicit, what is at the core of drama?

**Answer: Conflict**

3) Which category of theatre includes big musicals as well as comedies and dramas that are intended to be entertaining and profitable? They also contain safe themes, plenty of laughs, and spectacle designed to appeal to a majority of people, thereby filling lots of seats and ideally making lots of money.

**Answer: Commercial theatre**

4) Which category of theatre is designed to support the heritage, customs, and point of view of a particular people, religion, class, country, or community?

**Answer: Cultural theatre**

5) Is it true that the main purpose of art is to reaffirm society's values?

**Answer: No**

## ESSAY QUESTIONS

1) The Greeks could agree amongst themselves what the purpose of art was. How did they view the purpose of art and how are those points of view reflected in today's society?

2) Some people would argue that the arts have no real purpose for society. Some would say that the arts are essential for a society. What are the main arguments for each point of view? Where do you "come down" on this question and why?

3) American novelist Ayn Rand and German playwright Bertolt Brecht would argue that all art is political. What do they mean by that statement? Select a musical that is currently running on Broadway and describe how it is "political."