

The Effect of the Stage Organization Development on Playwriting

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ABSTRACT

Stage organization including its physical structure, spatial arrangement and even the audiences organization has had a profound effect on the career of playwriting throughout history. The development of the techniques and forms of the dramatic literature is the obvious result of the stage details evolving. The successive civilizations of humanity throughout history give the stage development a great deal of importance to reflect their vision and lifestyle of their time. we can find different kinds of the theaters which differentiate certain civilization from others by its unique style. Greek. Roman and English theaters are the greatest throughout history. This study will follow up the theater stage organization development which affect the playwrights viewpoints and thoughts in these civilizations.

Keywords: Theater, Drama, Characters, Actors, Playwright, Stage.

INTRODUCTION

The Ancient Greek appreciated the magic of the spoken words and made them as their lifestyle in communication and storytelling. For them, the spoken words was a living thing and preferred to the dead symbols of the written words. Socrates, the great Greek philosopher believed that once something has been written down, it will lost the ability of changing and growth. For these reasons the art of drama and theater flourished and reached its greatest point at that time. Greek tragedy, as we presently know, was born in Athens around 532 BC and Thespis regarded as the earliest Greek actor and the "inventor of the Greek tragedy".

When a spectator make a comparative evaluation to the theater's stage from Ancient Greek till the Modern, it is obvious that there was a great development of its organization to keep pace with the development of the human mind. Tragedy as well, have developed from the ancient choral lyric sung by male chorus in honor of the Greek gods performed with a group dancing and brief dialogue between the chorus and their leader. Greek therefore regarded as the founders of theater to be the place of their tragedies performance.

Greek tragedy was performed in their great capitol Athens at certain three festivals with comic, dithyrambic, and religious contents. Regardless of the changes and developments of drama in content and style, the performance remained as the most important element and the contents still as a regular part of the dramatic festivals at Athens. The Greek tragic performances must have been very organized with colorful spectacles to create a solemn act of devotion to the Gods.

The Greek Theater:

The Ancient Greek appreciated the magic of the spoken words and made them as their lifestyle in communication and storytelling, The Greek theater was built in the open air and was generally quite large, Dionysus Theater at Athens for example was built with more than seventeenth thousand seats, in a hollowed-out hillside. Despite their size, Greek theaters had an excellent acoustics for an important reason; the words and sounds spoken by the characters could easily heard by the audiences in all sections.

The area in which the audiences sit was called "Theatron" with a shape of seats organization just like the horseshoe in row design of stone seats that rising upward and backward. The first row was designed with luxury

because it was the thrones for the principal men with a special throne to the priest. The ground circular area which was enclosed on three sides was known as (ORCHESTRA). At the center of orchestra there was the (thymele) on which sacrifices were made and used as the stage prop when plays presented. On the open end of the theatron there was a wooden place called (SKENE) or scene, a building of the actors dressing. It was also served as the backdrop for the action of the drama. Skene had three doors which were used as an entrances and exits for the actors and the chorus of the drama.

There were few technical equipment available for special effect including devices for imitating lightning and thunder, noisemakers, painted scenery and the "machine" which was mounted on the roof of the skene to bring about a miraculous appearance of the Gods. According to these theatrical organization, the actors of the Greek drama performed in elaborate formal costumes, wearing masks to emphasize the dominant traits of the characters the perform. There were no women among the cast, all of them were just men and moreover they should be singers more than actors because most of their lyrical lines were accompanied with music. Greek tragic performances must be very colorful with the blending of drama, poetry and dancing music to create the demanded entertaining devotion to their Gods.

Greek stage was designed and prepared according to their plays which were divided into acts which is also divided into scenes, comedy and tragedy as kind of playwriting. To be typical of the period, a play should be properly constructed following many rules including adhering to the unities of action, time and place. Moreover, playwrights should be carefully restricted regarding the kind of drama; Tragedy always concern kings and nobles while Comedy always concern common people.

Aristotle in his (Poetics) defined Tragedy as "an imitation of a noble and complete action, having the proper magnitude and achieves through the representation of pitiable and fearful incidents, the catharsis of such pitiable and fearful incidents" (Carlson, 17). This Catharsis was the overall purpose of theater, affecting the spectator directly and purging them of "negative passions" like anger or "pride" in lieu of "moderation" (Carlson, 18). The greatness and elegance of the Greek drama pushed the theater stages to be as such that all the successive generations still regarding the Greek theater as the greatest.

English Theater:

English theater reached its glorious point with the coming of Elizabeth I to the throne. The elaborate temporary stages inside great halls or in the open courtyard of galleried inns from which the Elizabethan timber-framed open-air theaters took their form. The most famous Elizabethan stage, (The Globe) in London was multi-sided building with a covered platform stage against one side. All the performances of the plays at that time took place in daylight and the audiences sat or stood in the open courtyard. The first Globe in 1599 which was based on the skeleton of the original theater of 1576 was regarded as the unique one because it was the first to be built particularly for the contemporary acting company and the most famous example of the peculiar and short lived form of theater design.

In 1599 the greatest playwright William Shakespeare who had been acting with the company of (Lord Chamberlain's Men) paid the company 12.5 percent of the Globe building cost as a chief shareholder in the company to help in establishing a uniquely successful form of commercial operation for the actors. By doing this, he and other leading actors have had their share in the Globe playhouse. William Shakespeare designed many of his famous plays like King Lear, Hamlet, Macbeth, and Antony and Cleopatra to be performed in this playhouse. The importance of the stage increased at the time of the Stuart rule period that many rich aristocrats inserted themselves in the theatrical productions when they hosted them in their castles.

Masques parties were flourished to be a form of recreation for the royal court. Music was the most important element in the Masques celebrations for the dancing of the participants with much elaborate costumes and designs of the halls which were regarding as the stage of the Masked dancers. Inigo Jones was an Architect who devised the sets for several royal Masques and attributed with introducing the first proscenium arch, a decorative architectural frame over a thrust stage. In 1642, after the incident of king Charles, the Puritans religious thoughts was against the theaters plays performance; therefore, theaters were outlawed and had been closed and many of

them were demolished. But with the coming of king Charles II, theaters were return to work and presented many theatrical performances. During this period, the buildings of theaters began to change and influenced by the European theaters to be roofed with stages for changeable scenery. More space was added to the theater to accommodate these elaborate stages. With the growing of the Industrial Revolution, (Rural) people left their countries and migrate to the new Industrial towns. The result was the decline of the (Rural Theater) and the increase of the (Urban Theater) buildings in the centers of these populated towns. Playwrights criticized the effect of the industrial revolution on the people lifestyle; John Walker in his play (The Factory Led) in (1832) highlights the tension between the factory owners and the workers to reflect the new social and classes conflict which is the main outcome of the industrial revolution.

The beginning of the twentieth century saw the introduction of a new component in variety bills that would eventually lead to the closure of hundreds of theatres and music halls. This was the bioscope, a forerunner of the cinema. It was so popular that new or refurbished theatres often included provision for screening films.

Modern Theater:

The modern theater design witnessed a great changes according to the changes of the successive social and literary movements which had actually borrowed from each other's characteristics. Then, the modern theater is the conclusion of the historical "marry" of the traditional fine arts with the modern digital and technological elements regarding the variety of theater and the stage design expansion throughout the successive political and social eras. The early years of the twentieth century saw the introduction of new changes that would eventually lead to the creation of the Cinema Halls which was became so popular that new created theaters often included provision for screening films. The modern designers can "tailor" one modern theater design to serve different narratives and performances, their designs range from simple, abstract concepts to difficult detailed and multifunctional structures. Special effects like lighting and sound should be accounted as the most important features of the modern theater stages, for example, lighting is not just to illuminate the stage but it can play an important narrative role that shape the plot and the kind of the atmosphere of the drama. As well do the sound which has with the new technology the ability to transform the audiences minds from one mood to the other and persuades them about the reality and honest of any given scene. It is not exaggeration to consider lighting and sound effect as true and important characters in the modern drama. Modern drama witnessed a great development with the rise of secularism and science and lessening of religious and philosophical affections. In the twentieth century, theater took a very experimental turn with the growing of the social phenomenon and the questioning the nature of the reality. The time between the two world wars regarded as one the most times which painted by the social discontent and saw the rise of the Workers Theater Movement which used the theater as a device of advocating the social changes and to educate people. Modern literary movements like Surrealism, Dada and the Absurd Theater created new kind of non-real setting and structure depending on the idea of absurdity rather than realistic. Theaters of this period was set to provide multi-purpose use and built in a more functional architectural style. They created an opportunity to deal with different auditoria arrangements, while some of them built in the economical arrangements such as (theater-in-the-round) and courtyard-style and open stage. Today's stages designs are minimalist, abstract concepts and simple detailed with multifunctional structures with advanced technological systems. Designers of modern theaters should create their designs to be suitable for various narratives and performance styles.

CONCLUSION

Throughout the history of the successive civilizations, Drama regarded as the qualification of them and the judge of their social and political development. Thus, it is obvious that the authorities of these civilizations placed particular attention on the designs and decoration of the theaters. The growing development of the theater stage had strongly a profound impact on the ideology and thoughts of the playwrights and reshaped how they write and interpret their plays. However, despite the extreme changes during history we can see that the successive dramatic movements had borrowed from each other, particularly the variety of theater stage designs which expended over time. As stage design evolved from simple static sets to more dynamic and digital environment, playwrights have increasingly developed their scripts to incorporate these advancements to find deeper integration between their narratives and time. The traditional Greek stage design was primarily focusing on the

dialogue and characters, however, as new technologies were introduced, playwrights encouraged to think more about the relationship between the story and its physical setting. Moreover, stage design innovations have promoted playwrights to experiment with multi-layered storytelling and the blending of different media forms. This flexibility of modern stage design allowed for new dramatic possibilities with a particular experience in mind pushing the boundaries of traditional conventions of writing. The relationship between stage design and playwriting continues to be symbolic with each influencing and inspiring new creative possibilities.

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