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Understanding Theatre and Its Social Implications in a Modern Context

Sara Curtis

Chapman University, curti121@mail.chapman.edu

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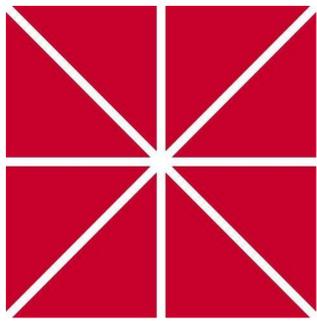
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Understanding Theatre and Its Social Implications in a Modern Context

Sara N. Curtis, Senior Thesis

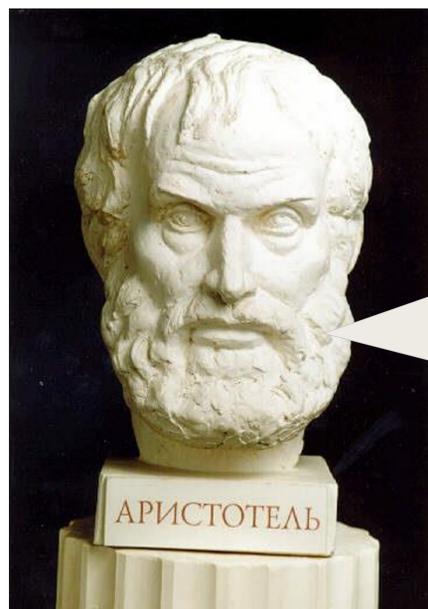
Dr. Jocelyn L. Buckner

Chapman University Department of Theatre

Topic: What is Theatre?

Theatre is often misunderstood. For the lay person, it is shrouded in mystery and surrounded by stereotypes. Theatre has fought for acceptance since its inception in Ancient Greece. To this day, critics, scholars, and the general populace alike theorize, philosophize, and debate over its purpose, intention, and craft practices. Theatre isn't simply the act of creating a dramatic presentation, it is the encompassing concept of production, design, performance, and criticism combined.

My research focuses on arts criticisms from the past and present, which I reference in order to shape an understanding of modern theatre. I developed my definition of theatre by expounding upon qualitative statements related to the performance, production, and impact of the art, and by relating those qualitative statements to theatre and theatrical criticism of the past.



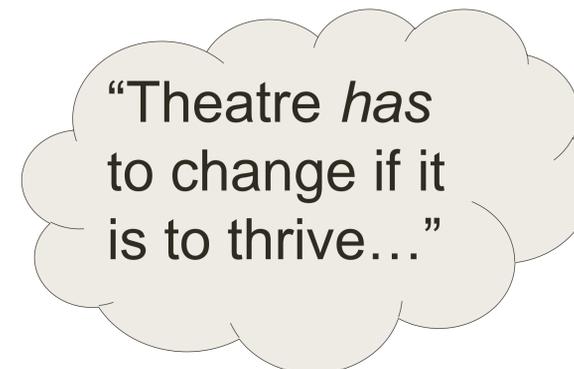
Aristotle
Photo: Darwinmuseum.ru

“Because [theatre] achieves its purpose more effectively than epic, tragedy must be superior.”

Aristotle. *Poetics*. London: Penguin Books, 1996. Print.

Research questions:

- Why do people go to the theater?
- How does theatre affect the audience, and, consequently, the community?
- What are the arguments for and against drama?
- Are there recurring themes in theatre throughout the ages?
- Are there recurring themes in theatrical critiques and essays about theatre throughout the ages?”



Brown, John Russell. *What Is Theatre?: An Introduction and Exploration*. Boston: Focal, 1997. Print.

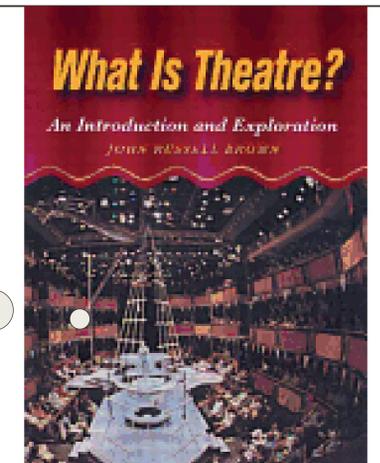


Photo: Alibris.com

Summary of Findings:

- Although it is constantly evolving and changing, modern theatre is greatly influenced by its historical ancestors. It is more accessible, more social, and more evocative than ever before.
- Theatre is deliberate. It may seem haphazardly thrown together, but every word is written, and spoken, with care.
- The theatre experience always evokes a response. The main purpose of drama is to convey a message, which could incite thought, encourage self-growth, promote a social cause, or simply tell a story.
- Ultimately, theatre is social. It is about interaction and immersion. The simple act of going to see a show is social, and of all of the interactions encountered during the theatrical experience, that which occurs between the performers and the audience is the most sacred and intimate, albeit the most indirect.