Theatre The Lively Art 9th edition Wilson Solutions Manual

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The Audience

Overview and Outline

Art is a mirror or reflection of life: an extension or a projection of how we live, think, and feel. Art reveals to us what we treasure and admire, and what we fear most deeply.

Art can be divided into three categories: *literary, visual,* and *performing*. The literary arts include novels, short stories, and poetry. The visual arts include painting, sculpture, architecture, and photography. The performing arts are theatre, dance, opera, and music. We also differentiate art in temporal and spatial terms.

The performing arts have many characteristics in common including movement through time, the need for creators and interpreters, and the requirement of audiences. Common elements to all theatre are audience, performers, and script or text, a director, theatre space, and design aspects.

Theatre is a collaborative art.

The presence of an audience is an essential element in a live theatre performance. We participate vicariously through heart and mind. The audience engages in "a willing suspension of disbelief" even though we also experience various aspects of theatre through aesthetic distance.

Just as no two performances of the same production are ever exactly alike, no two audiences are identical. Each audience is composed of a different mix of people, with varied ages, educational backgrounds, and occupations. Among the diverse groups toward which productions are aimed and whose members constitute specific audience groups are African Americans, Asian Americans, Latinos and Latinas, Native Americans, feminists, gays and lesbians, and other political and experimental groups. Also, the particular response of each audience affects the acting of the performers.

A special member of the audience is the critic or reviewer, who is assumed to be a knowledgeable observer of the theatre event. A reviewer is usually a reporter for a newspaper, magazine, or television station. After viewing a theatre event, the reviewer describes it and gives his or her own opinion as to whether it was well done and is worth seeing.

A critic, usually writing for a magazine or scholarly journal, describes and analyzes a theatre event in greater detail than the reviewer does. The critic should have a solid education in theatre history, dramatic literature, and theatrical production so that he or she can offer readers an informed judgment along with useful background information.

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Personal blogs and other forms of social media have given rise to other opinions about theatre productions.

The term dramaturg comes from a German word for "dramatic adviser." In Europe, the practice of having a dramaturg, or *literary manager,* attached to a theatre goes back well over a century.

There are cautionary notes, however, of which we should be aware. Quite often critic/reviewers state unequivocally that a certain play is extremely well or badly written, beautifully or atrociously performed, and so on. Because these so called authorities often speak so confidently and because their opinions appear in print or on the Internet, their words have the ring of authority. But as theatergoers, we should not be confused or unduly influenced by them.

I. What is Art?
   - A. Characteristics of Art
   - B. Characteristics of the Performing Arts

II. The Art of Theatre
   - A. The Elements of Theatre
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     - b. Performers
     - c. Script of Text
     - d. Director
     - e. Theatre Space
     - f. Design Elements
   - B. Theatre as a Collaborative Art

III. The Role of the Audience
   - A. How the Audience Participates
   - B. Make-up of Audiences Past and Present
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IV. The Audience and the Critic, Reviewer, and Blogger
   - A. The Critic, Reviewer, and Blogger
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   - D. Fact and Opinion in Criticism
   - E. Critical Criteria
     - a. What is Being Attempted
     - b. Have the Intentions Been Achieved
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   - F. The Dramaturg or Literary Manager
   - G. The Audience's Relationship to Criticism

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Feature:
Playing Your Part: Thinking About Theatre

Terms

visual arts
performing arts
spatial arts
temporal arts
script or text
director
willing suspension of disbelief
aesthetic distance
reviewer
focus groups
dramaturg or literary manager

Topics for Discussion

1. Explain the essential differences between the literary and visual arts on the one hand and the performing arts on the other. What do the various differences allow one art to do better than other arts? What differences prevent an art form from doing certain things?
   Answer: answers will vary.

2. In the text, a script is compared to a blueprint of a building. What other comparisons might be made? (Possibilities include a diagram of a football play, a computer flow sheet, and a road map). What information is missing from a script? Could it be included? Why might it be better not to do so?

3. Describe the transitory nature of theatre and the other performing arts and how they are different from literature and the visual arts.

4. The elements that must be present in order for theatre to take form are audiences, performers, and a text or script. What happens when one of these elements is no longer present?

5. Go to http://www.nbc.com/ and watch a show (or a short segment of a show) with a live studio audience like the *Tonight Show*, and then watch a show without an audience or a laugh

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track like *The Office*. How do the two experiences compare? Did the absence of a laugh track inhibit your laughing? Why or why not? Now, compare both those experiences to being in the audience at a live event. At the live event, did the audience around you affect your involvement? Why? Which experience did you find most enjoyable? Why?

Exercises and Demonstrations

1. Read professional critics' reviews of three current Broadway plays. Find (if possible) three different reviews for each play—one that is positive, one that is negative, and one that is mixed. Identify quotes from each review that prompted you to feel this way. (Broadwayworld.com provides links to professional reviews as does Playbill.com.

2. Discuss what is more important in making a decision as to whether to attend an event: reviews, or the advice of a friend? Why?

3. Read some of the theatre reviews at the following sites:
   http://theater.nytimes.com/pages/theater/index.html
   http://www.nypost.com/entertainment/theater
   If possible, read two or more reviews for the same show. Do the writers sound more like reviewers or critics? Now visit the site http://movies.go.com/ (click on the "Reviews" tab) and read some of the film reviews. Compare the reviews. Are they similar or different?

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