

THEATRE - WRY TO ORDER

Bathsheba Garnett

128 Wells St., Toronto, Ontario m5R 1P4 Canada.

What are the choices for Order in the Theatre production?

What choices must a director make?

What is the director's preparation to begin work on a play?

The chosen play should have an impact on the director. It should be a play he needs to do. If it 'speaks' to him, he can 'speak' for it.

He should read, be immersed and permit the variety of impacts to occur; He must permit his 'formless hunch' - the vague amorphous idea or sensation to evolve and point a direction the play might go in performance. He should follow his 'formless hunch'.

The 'space' or 'stage', must be considered next. It is best for the set-designer to follow along with rehearsals so that the set evolves to suit the play's needs.

Meeting the actors is always a revelation and an exposure to new insights and new potential for the play. In our first meeting, we do not discuss the play. We permit time for a variety of exercises and work so we can discover the play.

The actors do the first reading of the script and are requested not to impose any interpretations on the text.

This procedure takes the printed word off the page back to its original state: The spoken word as recorded by the playwright.

The thought, (not the sentence), is taken off the page and 'spoken' to the other actor. No one has the opportunity to show his acting ability. No one is able to make rapid decisions.

The participants always discover this reading most revealing of the text and sub-text, as well as their relations to the other characters. They are also aware that this is merely the beginning to much greater insights.

What they were not aware of, is that during this process, without 'acting', without forming preconceived attitudes, they have been exposing themselves and participating in a genuine exchange on a very simple honest level with the other actors. And a great wealth of dis-order emerged.

Gradually, the superfluous in behaviour or even nuance is pared away, but permitting the inspired insights gained by 'reading' between the words, to enrich the inner life of the characters. This way we get the play illuminated, Not a preconceived idea imposed on the play - but the play itself brought alive with genuine live human interaction.

The difference in this form of work is not to come with a preconceived 'directorial conception' but to arrive gradually by the end of the process in rehearsal to the crystallization of the 'sense of direction' perceived vaguely at the beginning of the work.

By shifting his viewpoint the director can get additional dimension in his characters. To find the light in the dark play, and to find the dark in the light play, adds this depth to each character. This can give the performances the vitality and dimension to enable audiences to be caught up in the play as participants to the experience. The dynamic quality unique to the theatre, is the live participation of the audience. It occurs when the various forces emanating from the audience and the actor have converged.

'The play is the thing' and for anyone - director, actor, designer or Technician, or anyone at all to steal centre stage from the play is defeating the effort of all the participants in this collective creative venture. It is surely the conflicting order and disorder that clash give theatre its eminence as the most difficult and enriching art.