
LETTERS

THE EDITOR:

I was glad to read, in the news reports covering your recent Manhattan transfer, that TDR does not wish to “become absorbed by the New York theatre.” Or, hopefully, the New York *anything*. So much would-be art in this city proves itself in retrospect to have been nothing more than the annual adjustment of the aesthetic hemline. One needs the city to dip into periodically, to take its temperature; but the real work, it seems to me, comes from withdrawal, the aware tension *against* the metropolitan vortex that pulls everyone in toward its dead center, desperate with angry egos and rootless ambitions. There are times, in the midst of the discotheques and happenings and all the bright young knowingness, when I feel exhilaratingly the force of Yeats’s epitaph: “Cast a cold eye/ on life, on death./ Horseman, pass by!”

Here’s to the same concerned detachment for TDR in New York. I feel fiercely on this because we’re at the edge of what could be the great age in American theatre. All the elements are here: the mixture of races and cultures, the wary hopes of the world, the wealth, the global focus. And when the breakthrough comes, it won’t come as happenings, or as cabaret, protest, “third” theatre—though these will probably add their share. It will come as it always has, through the single, unpredictable and unpredicted individual, the encompassing genius whose possibility will be denied until he appears—the next Shakespeare, Molière, Ibsen, Strindberg, Brecht, the dramatic poet summing up, not just a facet, but the whole of the age in his implications. And the work until then will be to keep things vital and open—“keep the pencils sharpened and the instruments clean,”

as William Carlos Williams said. Here TDR in its new location can be invaluable, deflating pretense and encouraging true innovation, keeping the authentic tradition alive and watching always for the first stirring of some mighty birth.

Rolf Fjelde
New York City

THE EDITOR:

I wish to correct a few small errors in the Eastern European Theatre issue of TDR (T35), of which I was special editor. Most of the errors are, I fear, nobody’s fault in particular; the captions of photos were not submitted to me for proofreading.

P. 25: The photo shows a scene from a straight play, *The Empty Field*, by Tadeusz Holuj, performed in Nowa Huta, a working-class suburb of Cracow. The actress, Irena Jun, is doing a take-off on someone like Marilyn Monroe.

P. 30, line 18: *The History of the . . . Resurrection* is attributed to Mikolaj of Wilkowiecko.

P. 35: The photo shows a *Hamlet* staged by Krejca, designed by Svoboda, and performed in Brussels.

P. 39: *The Big Wig*, a Slovakian play, was, naturally enough, staged in Bratislava, but guest performances were given in Prague, and so the caption is not entirely wrong.

P. 43: I saw the pictured production of *The Threepenny Opera* in 1965.

P. 47: *War and Peace*, at the Deutsches Theater, is not one of Besson’s productions. I should have substituted *La belle Hélène*.

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P. 95, 10th line from the end of the first column: The dramatist's name is spelled Drozdowski. In his capacity as Vice-Director of the Polish Cultural Institute of London I owe him enormous debts.

I want this to be a publication of record, and so I want it to be correct, at least in its after-life. Besides, I am too fond of Miss Jun and Mr. Drozdowski to permit one to be ignored and the other misspelled.

Henry Popkin
New York City

THE EDITOR:

The June TDR came yesterday. I'm sorry you never found pictures for my piece, but then I suppose you're sorry I never did. But that's not the point of this letter.

It's Andre Gregory's "comment." You certainly have a simplistic view of life if you accept that account as *the* account. Perhaps an incipient regional theatre movement has to have villains (Boards, an apathetic public, local critics) and heroes (committed directors), but I doubt really if much good comes from viewing the complicated world of regional theatre in blacks and whites. It was, after all, the burghers, not Gregory, who went into the slum and found the theatre (he came after it was chosen), although the particular burghers who found it were later moved out. I find the image somewhat ludicrous in any case—Gregory on the barricades of artistic freedom, asking us to look at his favorable review in *Time* magazine.

I was sorry to see Gregory go because he was lively and pugnacious (professionally: I do not know him personally) and his presence assured a certain amount of fireworks from South Street. I was even sorer to see George Sherman go (he had directed the best production to date: *The Last Analysis*) and David Hurst go (he was the best actor in the company), and presumably their going had a great deal more to do with Gregory than it did with the Board. Show folks (as the scripts to old cowboy movies used to call them) are notoriously impossible and I would not dare to guess who was right and who was wrong in the riffs downtown, but I do know that a Board is not the only disruptive element in a theatre. As for *Beclch* being the cause for AG's going, I would look closer. As