

PREFACE

By definition, a history is a chronicle—a recapitulation of events from the past. It cannot, therefore, be a contemporary, spontaneous occurrence. And yet, that is precisely what theatre is—a theatre event exists not in the past but in the present. In fact, it exists only at the moment when it occurs. The essence of theatre is an immediate exchange between the audience and what unfolds onstage: performances, words of a text, and visual effects of sets, lights, and costumes.

The first challenge of writing a theatre history, therefore, is to bring theatre from the past to life today. In *Living Theatre*, we have taken a number of steps to achieve this. The fourth edition of *Living Theatre* retains all the features that have been well received by students and professors in the past. And yet, it represents an important advance over the three previous editions by adding a number of significant elements.

ESTABLISHED FEATURES IN LIVING THEATRE

Each theatrical era is set in a *broad social, political, and economic context*. The opening section of each chapter establishes the framework for theatre practitioners: playwrights, performers, managers, architects, and designers.

The different approaches with respect to how history should be viewed and thought—*revisionism, feminism, deconstructionism, multiculturalism, semiotics, Marxism, and post-modernism*—are carefully presented in the Introduction, and noted where appropriate in the text.

Biographical sections are an integral part of the text. These highlight the artists who created theatre, and provide students with the interesting information that makes these individuals come alive.

Debates in Theatre History boxes help to foster critical thought, and give students an awareness of the ever-changing nature of theatre history. In these we focus on some point of disagreement among scholars and historians, to underscore the fact that no single view of history should be taken as immutable.

NEW FEATURES IN THE FOURTH EDITION

NEW DESIGN

The *design* of the fourth edition has been changed throughout, with pedagogical advantages in mind. More color inserts have been included, offering sixteen pages of full *color photos*, in order to fully demonstrate the visual experience of the theatre. Also, we've incorporated a second color, which offers more clarity in the maps and diagrams, and enhances the special features in the text. We hope that students will want to keep this text as a reference in their permanent library.

ORGANIZATION

The chapter on “Early Asian Theatre” has been placed before the chapter on “Medieval Theatre.” This move serves two purposes: first, all the “early theatre” chapters are now in sequence. Second, the move allows an instructor to turn directly from covering Medieval Theatre to the Theatres of the Renaissance, creating a more logical sequence.

We have divided the former final chapters into two chapters. The first of these, chapter 15, is devoted entirely to developments in “American Theatre Since 1975.” The new chapter 16 covers the “International Theatre” world much more extensively than before. This new chapter includes material not only on Britain and Europe, but also Asia, Africa, the Middle East, and South America. The expansion of these two chapters allows us to explore the important developments in both of these content areas.

While we have made these changes in organization, it is important to note that we have made every effort to avoid an encyclopedic approach to theatre history. While more comprehensive than ever before, this text can easily be covered during the typical one or two-semester undergraduate theatre history course.

ADDITIONS AND UPDATES

At the end of each chapter, we have added a *summary and review section*. Included in this is an easy-to-understand chart that juxtaposes the people and events in theatre to social, cultural, and political developments. This should provide an invaluable tool for both students and faculty in reviewing and reinforcing the material in each chapter. Additionally, we have added a new element to the regular text appendixes: the “Pronunciation Guide.” This guide will provide students with a helpful reference for the correct pronunciation of foreign or difficult terms.

In addition to the specific changes listed above, the fourth edition has been *revised and updated throughout*, taking special care to highlight the important contributions made by women and minority playwrights, actors, and directors. The latest research, new approaches to studying history, and new theories have been taken note of and explained. Also, in a nod to the importance of geographical context, we have revised many of our maps, and now include a new map depicting the theatrical centers of Asia. As appendixes, we include our glossary of theatrical terms and an updated bibliography. These, along with the new pronunciation guide, should make for handy reference tools for students.

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