

Instructor's Resource Manual  
for

The Essential Theatre  
10th edition

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## PREFACE

This instructor's manual is intended as a resource for instructors using *The Essential Theatre*, 10<sup>th</sup> edition as a main textbook for their course. *The Essential Theatre* is malleable to a number of uses. Certainly, among its many uses the main two are as a textbook for courses in theatre appreciation (teaching future theatregoers) and introduction to theatre (teaching future theatre makers). This instructor's manual has been written with this broad potential usage in mind, and mindful of the very different contexts in which one may teach such courses.

### Pedagogy Issues

There is neither one correct way to teach a course, nor a one correct way to use *The Essential Theatre* or this instructor's manual. Therefore, this manual strives to enhance your flexibility and to contribute valuable pedagogical tools.

**Flexibility** Some instructors may not cover *The Essential Theatre* in the order that the chapters are presented, while others may choose to cover only certain chapters or parts of chapters. For this reason, the manual offers broad overviews of each of the book's three parts but treats each chapter individually. The detailed table of contents allows the instructor to turn quickly to a particular chapter or section as needed.

**Pedagogical Tools** A useful instructor's manual offers the teacher pedagogical assistance. This manual includes a wide number of pedagogical tools, including: identification of key terminology, detailed chapter outlines, possible discussion questions, sample quiz questions, essay questions (both short and long), and suggested class activities. The manual also identifies additional activities that combine information or concepts from two or more chapters to facilitate student integration of the material. Many of these activities allow students to actively experience the process of creating theatre from the point of view of various theatre practitioners. The manual also identifies for the instructor pertinent video resources relating to the material and to the plays from *Plays for the Theatre*, 10<sup>th</sup> edition (the play anthology intended as a companion to *The Essential Theatre*). Finally, the manual identifies website resources by providing a list of theatre research databases on the World Wide Web.

For each chapter of *The Essential Theatre* several teaching tools have been made available to you:

**Key Terminology** – A list of specialized terms, concepts, names of key theatre practitioners and theatres for each chapter. To provide maximum flexibility, a specialized term that appears in more than one chapter has been included in the list for each chapter in which it appears.

**Outlines** – Each chapter of *The Essential Theatre* has been outlined for you. Each outline follows this basic format:

- I. Heading
  - A. Primary point of a paragraph
    1. Sub-point within the paragraph
      - a. Clarification or example of the sub-point
        - i. Further clarification, often a list of examples

This manual may occasionally deviate from this basic outline where clarity is improved by doing so. As you wish, the outline may serve as an organizational tool for lecture or more simply as one distillation of the chapter's content.

**Discussion Questions** – The discussion questions provided aim to engage the students in processing what they have read, encouraging them to make connections, comparisons and contrasts. In some instances, the questions ask the students to relate the material to their lives and experiences. These discussion questions (as well as the sample quiz and essay questions) focus their attention on one or more of the four broad pedagogical goals developed by *The Essential Theatre*:

1. Creating an awareness of how theatre uniquely explores and processes the human experience by shaping ideas and perceptions about our lives into an active experience that can stimulate critical thought, discussion and our imaginations.

2. Developing the critical acumen to evaluate the effectiveness of theatre practitioners' work, as well as their collaborative interaction in theatrical productions.
3. Recognizing theatre's diversity by understanding the relationship between dramatic literature (of different periods and styles) and the performance conditions, practices, and conventions for which it was written.
4. Understanding of the function, process, and methods linked to the art form's various practitioners - playwrights, directors, designers, actors, etc.

**Sample Quiz Questions** – The multiple choice and true/false questions provided gauge retention of factual information. Still, the manual recognizes that quizzes and tests may also be active learning experiences for students as they separate and piece together pertinent information. For this reason some multiple-choice questions reaffirm specific characteristics or practices related to a larger concept or practitioner, while others require the student to discern fine distinctions between concepts and practices. Likewise, some of the true/false questions carry multiple bits of information and require students to distinguish whether all the information provided is true - if any portion of the statement is false, then the statement as a whole is considered to be false. Some instructors may wish to use the sample quiz questions from various chapters to construct their midterm or final examinations. *Use the tools provided as you think best.*

**Sample Essay Questions** – The sample essay questions allow students to apply their knowledge and to make connections or draw comparisons between topics covered within the chapter. Frequently, the questions ask students to take a stance on an issue or to view practices and concepts from the position a theatre practitioner or audience member. Please note that many of the essay questions require a long answer that might prove suitable for an exam or even for short papers but are less suitable for use in a “quiz.” Other sample essay questions may well prove suitable for quizzes.

**Suggested Activities** – Activities sometimes spark questions arising from a shared experience where lecture does not. The activities suggested hope to facilitate the application of each chapter's knowledge through a variety of experiences. Many of the activities provide opportunities for the students to experience the process of creating theatre from the point of view of its various practitioners.

At the end of this instructor's manual several additional teaching tools have been made available to you:

**Additional Activities** – These activities are provided primarily to open up additional classroom activities for you. The activities suggested combine information from two or more chapters and are intended to facilitate the application of this knowledge in a variety of experiences. Wherever possible these activities provide opportunities for the students to experience rather than simply read about the process of creating theatre.

**Video Resources** – Provided for you is a listing of video resources for the plays and for topics covered in *The Essential Theatre*. The videos listed are by no means exhaustive but they may prove particularly useful to those instructors teaching introduction to theatre or theatre appreciation courses who might not yet have identified such resources. The video resources may also prove particularly useful for those using the tenth edition of *Plays for the Theatre*.

**Website Resources** – Provided for you is a listing of theatre research databases on the World Wide Web. Each database provides numerous links to theatre related topics, practitioners, companies, etc.

## **Key Revisions to *The Essential Theatre and Plays for the Theatre*, 10<sup>th</sup> Edition**

The tenth edition of *The Essential Theatre* has been re-organized to make the broad overview of theatre's many expressions more clear. Chapter 7 now not only looks at modernism as an influence on theatre and drama from 1885 to 1941, but also examines its significant effects through the early 1960s. Chapter 8's treatment of decentralization and subsidization now includes a broader consideration of how these factors have led to the inclusion of new directions for theatre and new voices such as Steven Dietz, whose play *Becky's New Car* emerged through not-for-profit regional theatre in Seattle. Chapter 9 now focuses more squarely on events, influences and expressions of *contemporary* theatre and drama, discussing, for example, Octavio Solis' controversial new play *Lydia*, a play critics have compared to American classics by Arthur Miller and Eugene O'Neill.

Profile treatments of important new playwrights have been added as has a discussion of how globalization and our online culture have produced a new wave of theatre makers whose work crosses cultural, national and ethnic boundaries.

The feature boxes throughout the book have been considerably revamped and include such new subjects as Cirque du Soleil (as a popular theatre form not based on a written play) and The Factory (a London theatre group who uses audience interface strategies which closely resemble those of the rock band Radiohead and the graffiti artist Banksy), and the recent Broadway revival of *Hair*. These color-coded boxes give special emphasis to topics of broad social and cultural interest and to address pertinent theories, practices, and people in concrete detail.

## **Acknowledgements**

As with the Instructor's Resource Manual for the ninth edition of *The Essential Theatre*, I would like to thank Oscar G. Brockett and Robert J. Ball for asking me to take on this project for them.

I am also indebted to my colleagues at Trinity University, particularly Tim Francis for his advice and assistance with proofreading.

## Part One – Foundations

- I. Part One – Foundations
    - A. Theatre is a complex art at least 2500 years old, and has been as diverse as the cultures in which it has appeared.
      - 1. It has undergone many changes and followed diverse paths
    - B. Such diversity invites questions about what theatre’s varied manifestations have in common and the significance of their differences
      - 1. It also invites questions about theatre’s appeal:
        - a. Why do people create theatre?
        - b. What attracts audiences to it?
        - c. What makes one production seem better to us than another?
    - C. Part One examines some basic issues:
      - 1. The nature and function of theatre
      - 2. The relationship of theatre to other art forms
      - 3. Criteria for judging theatrical performances
      - 4. How play scripts are structured
    - D. These explorations will help build the foundation for a fuller understanding and appreciation of theatre and the processes of theatrical production
- 

## Chapter 1 - The Nature of Theatre

### Terminology

Theatre	Drama	Theatrical conventions
Prior censorship	Self-censorship	Esthetic distance
Willing suspension of disbelief	Empathy	Multiple types of intelligence

### Outline

- I. Theatre’s Origins
  - A. Tribal rituals, storytelling and mimicry
  - B. Theatre achieved a distinct identity 2500 years ago
    - 1. During its long history, theatre has been both denounced and praised, and its value frequently questioned
    - 2. Some have deemed theatre as immature, immoral or dangerous and others as acceptable entertainment or a truthful reflection of human behavior



## II. The Basic Elements of Theatre

### A. What is performed (the script, scenario or plan)

1. “A performs B for C”
  - a. “A” = Producers, directors, designers, performers, etc
  - b. “B” = Script, scenario or plan
  - c. “C” = Audience
2. There is a great diversity in “what” can be performed

### B. The performance (the production)

1. The people whose efforts make a production happen: producer, director, actors, designers, etc.
2. Production components: the play, acting, scenery, costumes, lighting, music, dance

### C. The audience

1. Continuous feedback between the performers and the audience, as well as among audience members affects the performance experience
2. Audience expectations and motivations affect what is performed
3. Not all theatre will appeal to all segments of the public

## III. Theatre as a Form of Art

### A. Theatre should entertain, but not everyone finds the same things entertaining

### B. What is art?

1. Art is often depicted as too complex to be fully understandable
2. The unfamiliar makes us uncomfortable

#### BOX – Prior Censorship and Self-Censorship

- “Prior Censorship” – forbidding the printing, performance, or display of works without prior approval
- “Self-Censorship” – the curtailment of expressions that might be considered controversial or offend a powerful individual or group

3. The many different attitudes about what art is “worthwhile” and what art is not, may stem from our cultural perspective or the context in which the art is presented
  - a. Popular culture vs. elitist culture
  - b. The use of unfamiliar or strange theatrical conventions may confuse spectators
  - c. Theatrical conventions share characteristics with those of sporting events, yet have many differences
  - d. The purpose of the performance (entertainment, social justice, provoking thought, etc.)

#### BOX – Cirque du Soleil

- Not all theatre is based on a playscript
- Cirque du Soleil achieves international appeal through visual spectacle that follows a theme or tells a simple story
- At the heart of it all are the circus clowns and acrobats

### 4. Distinguishing characteristics of art

- a. Art provides one way of understanding the world
  - i. By reflecting fundamental patterns of human behavior
  - ii. By involving the audience’s emotions, imagination, intellect

- iii. The stage is a magnifying glass - examination of the human experience
- b. Spectator response
  - i. Willing suspension of disbelief, esthetic distance, and empathy all play important roles
  - ii. Theatre involves us esthetically and empathically
  - iii. Always open to multiple interpretations

**BOX – The Factory**

- Does not use many standard theatrical practices or conventions
- Embraces the immediacy of theatre
- Allows the company to explore only what is essential to theatre

**IV. Special Qualities of Theatre**

- A. Lifelikeness
- B. Ephemerality
- C. Objectivity
- D. Complexity of its means
- E. Immediacy
  - 1. Theatre has important attributes that TV and Film do not duplicate
    - a. 3-dimensional experience
    - b. Interactive relationship
    - c. Focus
    - d. Audience imagination

**V. Art and Value**

- A. Art has the capacity to improve the quality of life
- B. Art is a form of cultural expression
- C. Theatre (and other fine and performing arts) is sometimes undervalued because it does not yield the same concrete benefits as engineering or medicine
- D. Although standardized tests typically acknowledge and value linguistic and mathematical abilities, there may be other abilities that, as additional types of intelligence, can be viewed as valuable:
  - a. Musical
  - b. Kinesthetic
  - c. Spatial
  - d. Interpersonal
  - e. Intrapersonal
  - i. Theatre develops and uses all of these types of intelligence

**Discussion Questions**

1. This chapter discusses “art” and the value it may or may not have in today’s society. What distinguishes “art” from other expressions or experiences? Do you think of theater as “art” or “entertainment”? Are these terms mutually exclusive? Why, or why not? What value does art (in general) and theatre (in specific) have for you?
2. Different people find different types of stories or experiences entertaining. What do you find entertaining? How open are you to new experiences?
3. Theatre often exposes audiences to diverse subjects and themes from a variety of perspectives. Are there particular subjects, themes, or perspectives that you would not want to see staged? Would you endorse the use of censorship to keep others from viewing these same subjects, themes, and/or perspectives? Why, or why not?

4. Try to image life without the arts: music, dance, theatre, television, film, painting, sculpture, etc. What effect would their absence have on your life?
5. In what ways does theatre resemble life?

### Suggested Activity

Everyone's taste for art varies widely. You might clarify this by introducing examples of what would be considered "high-brow" and "low-brow" works of art (for example, you might contrast a Saturday Night Live sketch with a foreign art film). Ask the students to determine which they consider to be a work of "art," or, if they consider all your examples works of art, which they consider to be "high-brow" and which "low-brow." Then, ask them to explain on what basis they made these distinctions. Such an activity might lead to an energetic discussion of what qualifies as "art" as well as on the role context, form, and purpose play in making such distinctions. Some instructors in smaller classes may wish to divide the class into two groups: one group articulating arguments that support an elitist stance on art, while the other group advocates a rationale that supports a pop-culture perspective.

### Sample Quiz Questions

#### Multiple Choice

1. \_\_\_\_ Which statement best describes "willing suspension of disbelief"?
  - A). A technique used by actors in which they defer their own reality to accept that of the play
  - B). A dynamic in which the audience agrees to accept the fictional world of the play on an imaginative level while knowing it to be untrue.
  - C). A psychological dynamic in which one group of audience members can affect the responses of others to an event, particularly if they share the same cultural background.
2. \_\_\_\_ In the statement "A performs B for C" which of the following is **NOT** a component of "A"?
  - A). Producer
  - B). Designer
  - C). Audience
  - D). Actor
3. \_\_\_\_ Which statement accurately reflects similarities between theatrical performance and sports?
  - A). Both have players and spectators
  - B). Both have specialized dress for their participants
  - C). Both have a special playing space or area for the activity
  - D). All of the above
  - E). None of the above
4. \_\_\_\_ Which does **NOT** express a difference between theatre and games or sports?
  - A). Theatre has a predetermined outcome
  - B). In theatre, audience loyalty or support is formed during the performance rather than preceding it.
  - C). In theatre, spectators assemble at a special time and place for the event

5. \_\_\_\_\_ What types of intelligence does theatre develop and make use of?
- A). Verbal
  - B). Mathematical
  - C). Musical
  - D). All of the above
  - E). None of the above

### **True/False**

1. \_\_\_\_\_ Parades, juggling, pantomime and street carnivals may all be considered theatrical entertainments
2. \_\_\_\_\_ Audience taste may significantly influence what is performed, how it is performed and where it is performed.
3. \_\_\_\_\_ All theatre depends upon a script as its basic starting point.
4. \_\_\_\_\_ Because of “empathy,” we don’t call the police if we see a character murdered on the stage during a performance.
5. \_\_\_\_\_ It is much easier to control audience focus in the theatre than it is on television or film.

### **Essays**

1. Theatre uniquely represents the human condition and experience. Address the ways in which theatre operates differently from film or television.
2. “A does B for C” is perhaps the simplest definition of theatre. Who is “A,” what is “B,” and who is “C”? What aspect or role does each contribute to the theatre experience? How do they interact or influence each other?

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### **Quiz answers**

Multiple Choice: (1) B pg. 17, (2) C pg. 6, (3) D pgs. 12-15, (4) C pg.12-15, (5) D pg. 23

True/False: (1) True pg.6, (2) True pg. 9, (3) False pg. 6, (4) False, pg. 17, (5) False pg. 21

## Chapter 2 – The Audience and Criticism

### Terminology

Conventions

Critic

Criticism

### Outline

- I. The audience is an essential part of theatrical performance
  - A. Audience perception of staged events completes the creative process
  - B. Audiences invariably form their own interpretations of the staged events and their significance.
  - C. The artists who make the performance typically work to evoke a desired audience response.
  
- II. Experiencing a Performance
  - A. Attending a play differs in several ways from going to a film
    1. Greater sense of special occasion
    2. Tickets and seating
    3. Programs and intermission
    4. Audience response can affect the event
  - B. Theatre uses various devices to prepare audiences in advance
    1. Advance publicity
    2. Programs
    3. View of stage and preshow music
  - C. Although there are no rules about how to experience a theatrical performance, the experience is generally more interesting if:
    1. The audience is willing to pay attention, concentrate and engage their imagination
      - a. The use of theatrical conventions (especially unfamiliar ones) may require an audience's imagination
      - b. The directors seek to direct the audience attention, but complete control of audience attention or focus is impossible to achieve
      - c. Size and configuration of the auditorium affects audience response.
  
- III. Who is the Audience?
  - A. Theatre audiences vary widely
    1. Whereas some theatres select plays to appeal to the broadest possible range of audience interests, others aim their selections towards the tastes of a very particular group
    2. Most theatres are concerned about attracting new audiences

#### BOX – Culturally Conditioned Audience Response

- Audiences are conditioned to respond differently to different types of performances
- Conventions of audience behavior change markedly over time. Many audiences of the past behaved in a more rowdy fashion than do today's typical theatre audience
- Similarly, audience behavior previously reserved for exceptional experiences (a standing ovation) is now quite commonplace

- B. Attracting new audiences is not easy and sometimes alienates existing patrons
  - 1. Some theatres receive funding to encourage racial or minority groups to attend
  - 2. Some theatres cater exclusively to minorities
- C. Some theatres challenge the audience to appreciate unfamiliar forms of theatre
- D. How can theatres attract young audiences and those groups who normally don't go to the theatre?
  - 1. Outreach and educational programs have met with some success

**BOX – Theatre for a New Audience**

- Founded in 1979 to make drama and theatre more accessible to young people, through both attending performances and participating in creating theatre.

**IV. The Audience and Critical Perspective**

- A. Do we need a critical perspective to enjoy theatre?
- B. A simple three-step process may allow us to better articulate our response to a theatrical event
  - 1. One has an experience
  - 2. One analyzes the experience
  - 3. One communicates one's response to another
- C. The professional critic needs:
  - 1. A wide variety of theatrical experience
  - 2. An understanding of the practices and processes that make up a production
- D. Usually, the critic has a particular audience and purpose in mind
  - 1. The general public and/or a specialized audience (academics, artists, etc.)
- E. Some critics see themselves as consumer guides

**BOX – Influence of Criticism**

- Widely distributed critical opinion (through the reviews written in newspapers, magazines, etc.) may influence ticket sales, but does not necessarily “make or break” a production's popular appeal
- A reviewer's response may influence how others respond because the reviewer may establish a context that becomes associated with the production

- F. The best criticism requires attention to both excellence and shortcomings
  - 1. Some critics may provide less-than-balanced discussion
  - 2. Some critics may provide description without passing judgment
  - 3. Some critics may be condescending or flippant, but such criticism breeds antipathy

**V. The Basic Problems of Criticism**

- A. The critic is concerned with three basic problems:
  - 1. Understanding – What were the playwright, director and other theatre artists trying to do?
  - 2. Effectiveness – How well did they do it?
  - 3. Ultimate worth - How valuable was the experience?
- B. Critics may follow several paths to answer questions relating to “understanding”
  - 1. Some may study the playwright, the script, and the production team's stated goals
  - 2. Some may attend the production with no preconceived notions
    - a. Critics may (by necessity) have to write about the performance of a play they know little about
- C. To answer questions related to “effectiveness” some critics may focus on the play's intention or the director's interpretation

1. Some directors' interpretations are at variance with a play's intentions
- D. Any response to "ultimate worth" assumes some standard against which worth can be measured
  1. Assessment of "ultimate worth" is related to individual perspective and values.
  2. Many contexts are used in evaluating relative worth
    - a. Uncovering the stated or implied criteria in a review can be very instructive
- E. We should define for ourselves what makes a production satisfying or not
  1. In assessing our own critical stance, here are some questions one might ask:
    - a. Am I open to unfamiliar subjects, ideas or conventions?
    - b. In the theatre, am I uncomfortable with moral stances that differ from my own?
    - c. Are there subjects I think should not be treated on the stage? If so, what?
    - d. What standards do I use in judging a play or performance? Why?
- F. Developing a critical response
  1. Ask the 3 major questions of critical assessment
    - a. What was attempted?
    - b. How fully was it accomplished?
    - c. How valuable was the experience?
  2. Elaborate with other major questions:
    - a. What play was performed? Who is the playwright? What information about the playwright or play is important for understanding the production?
    - b. Where and when did the performance take place? Will there be additional performances?
    - c. Who was involved in the production – producer, director, actors, designers, etc.?
    - d. What were the apparent goals of the play or production?
    - e. How effectively and fully were the goals realized (in the directing, acting, design elements)?
    - f. Should others see it? Why?

## VI. Qualities Needed by the Critic

- A. A critic should strive to be:
  1. Sensitive to feelings, images and ideas.
  2. As well acquainted as possible with the theatre of all periods and of all types.
  3. Willing to explore plays and their production processes.
  4. Tolerant of innovation.
  5. Aware of his or her own prejudices and values.
  6. Articulate and clear in expressing judgments and their bases
  7. Courteous.

### **Discussion Questions**

1. Why might the individual responses of various people attending the same performance of a play differ?

2. Should one take into consideration the context in which a performance takes place when estimating its value or effectiveness? Should amateur performances be judged with the same standard used for professional ones? If so, why? If not, why not?
3. What are some of the different purposes for a theatre critic? In what ways might any audience member be thought of as a critic? What are the advantages to processing and articulating our responses to a work of art (whether it is a theatre performance or a painting)?
4. Do theatre practitioners need critics? What potential value does criticism have on theatre practice?

### Suggested Activity

1. You may wish to consider having your students attend a theatrical performance (or to watch a film of one if attendance is not possible). Ask the students to write a critique that would be suitable for publication in a newspaper. To expand on the project, ask your students to write two reviews – one that is wholly descriptive without passing judgment, and another that elaborates on the major questions of critical response (listed on page 36 of the text).

### Sample Quiz Questions

#### Multiple Choice

1. \_\_\_\_ Which statement **BEST** defines the rules about how to experience a theatrical performance?
  - A). The audience sits in the dark and quietly watches the play
  - B). The audience is encouraged to interact socially during the play, and come and go freely
  - C). There are no rules on how to experience a theatrical performance, but it may be more satisfying if one pays attention and uses their imagination
  - D). The audience must read the play prior to the performance
2. \_\_\_\_ Audience response to a performance can be affected by which factor?
  - A). The size and shape of the auditorium
  - B). Other audience members
  - C). Each audience members' imagination and concentration
  - D). All of the above
  - E). None of the above
3. \_\_\_\_ Which is **NOT** part of the three-step process for developing critical judgement?
  - A). One has an experience
  - B). One analyzes the experience
  - C). One develops a subjective response
  - D). One communicates one's response to another
4. \_\_\_\_ Which is **NOT** one of the three basic problems of criticism?
  - A). Understanding
  - B). Research
  - C). Effectiveness
5. \_\_\_\_ Although some theatre critics may write flippant remarks, the most constructive or useful criticism:



- A). Balances itself with a discussion of both excellence and shortcomings
- B). Provides sufficient description of the production for the reader to understand the experience
- C). Seeks to understand, evaluate the effectiveness of the production, and relates (however subjectively) its ultimate worth.
- D). All of the above
- E). None of the above

**True/False**

- 1. \_\_\_\_\_ A reader may re-read, reflect, and sustain several possible interpretations of a line, scene or entire play, but the playgoer experiences the action and characters more immediately and directly.
- 2. \_\_\_\_\_ What the audience sees is always the only possible interpretation of a script.
- 3. \_\_\_\_\_ Theatres which produce plays intended for a small segment of the population (such as minorities) find it much easier to attract an audience than theatres whose goal it is to appeal to the community as a whole.
- 4. \_\_\_\_\_ Professional critics always adhere to a single context in making their judgments.
- 5. \_\_\_\_\_ Some plays and musicals have met with negative or mixed reviews and still achieved popular success.

**Essay**

- 1. In critically assessing a work of art, what three major questions does a critic need to ask? State each question and explain its meaning and implications.
- 2. Why is it sometimes difficult for theatres to attract new audiences? What obstacles stand in the way of this endeavor? What are some of the ways theatres have tried to attract new audiences? How successful do you think these practices might be on you and your peers?