

BROADSIDE

NEWSLETTER OF THE THEATRE LIBRARY ASSOCIATION

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New Series

TLA PRESENTS BOOK AWARDS AT GALA CELEBRATION

At the most glittering celebration in its history, the Theatre Library Association presented its annual book awards on May 15, 1984, in the Vincent Astor Gallery of the New York Public Library at Lincoln Center. The ceremony was attended by several hundred TLA members and honored guests who were welcomed by President Dorothy Swerdlove. Secretary-Treasurer Richard Buck introduced the distinguished presenters.

The George Freedley Memorial Award was given to **Martin Meisel** for *Realizations: Narrative Pictorial and Theatrical Arts in Nineteenth-Century England*. The presentation was made by **Jeremy Irons**, currently starring on Broadway in Tom Stoppard's *The Real Thing*. New York Film Festival Director **Richard Roud** received the Theatre Library Association Award for *A Passion for Films: Henri Langlois and the Cinematheque Francais*. The award was presented by **Martin Segal**, Chairman of the Board of Lincoln Center, and accepted on Mr. Roud's behalf by **Sallie Blumenthal**, former Executive Director of the Film Society of Lincoln Center and American Representative of the Cinematheque Francais. **Richard Koszarski** received the Theatre Library Award Honorable Mention for *The Man You Loved to Hate: Erich von Stroheim and Hollywood* from dancer/actress **Vera Zorina**, who appeared with von Stroheim in the 1940 film *I Married an Adventuress*.

The George Freedley Memorial Award is given annually for excellence in writing about the theatre. The Theatre Library Association Award is presented to outstanding works in the fields of motion pictures and broadcasting.



Martha Mahard, Brooks McNamara, Babette Craven



Front row, from right: Martin Meisel, Miss Meisel, Jeremy Irons, Vera Zorina, Martin Segal, Sallie Blumenthal

TRANSITION

After several years of splendid service as Chairman of the TLA Book Award Juries, **Don Wilmeth** has decided to step down. He will continue to serve as a juror. The Executive Board of TLA, by acclamation, voted a resolution of thanks to Mr. Wilmeth.

Mary Ann Jensen, Vice-President and book award jury member, has been appointed the new Chair. Members may suggest titles for next year's awards by writing to her at the William Seymour Collection, Princeton University Library, Princeton, NJ 08540.



Martin Meisel, Martha Mahard, Dorothy Swerdlove

1984 AMERICAN FILM FESTIVAL

The 26th American Film Festival, sponsored by the **Educational Film Library Association**, was held in New York City from May 28 through June 2, 1984. The purpose of the festival, which is held annually, is "to showcase the outstanding 16mm and video releases of the preceding year in order to recognize the achievements of film and video makers and to stimulate the use of film/video in libraries, universities, schools, museums, and other community agencies." That goal was more than fulfilled through the screening of 474 finalist films and videotapes and the awarding of Blue and Red Ribbons in 77 categories.

There were many films of interest in the "Performing Arts—Features" category. These included *Poetry in Motion*, which features an assortment of live and studio performances by several of North America's most interesting poets; *Joe Chaikin, Going On*, a portrait of the actor/director against the background of his theatrical endeavors; *Storytelling*, an exploration of the structure of narrative which interweaves the tales of seven storytellers; *Free Show Tonight*, the Red Ribbon winner, which documents the last performance of a troupe of aging traveling medicine show performers; *Rockaby*, the Blue Ribbon winner, a study of Samuel Beckett's new work which includes the entire play as well as the creation processes of actress Billie White-law and director Alan Schneider; and *Kiss Me Petruchio*, a documentary based on the New York Shakespeare Festival's production of *The Taming of the Shrew*, starring Meryl Streep and Raul Julia. We hope to publish reviews of these interesting films in upcoming issues of *Broadside*.

Other highlights of the festival include the opening night tribute to the late Robert Flaherty in his centennial year; a pre-festival workshop in video collection management; and a special conference concerned with the future of educational media.

The participants at the festival were introduced to Marilyn Levin, the new Executive Director of the Educational Film Library Association. As usual, the festival was ably coordinated by Festival Director Claire Monaghan. For information on next year's festival write to EFLA, 45 John Street, New York, NY 10038.

QUERY

Dr. Donald H. Harter is interested in any material relating to the American producer, actor and dramatist, Edgar Selwyn (1875-1944) as well as to the George and Ira Gershwin musical *Strike Up the Band* (1927, 1930). Please respond to Donald H. Harter, M.D., Apartment 2610, 900 North Lake Shore Drive, Chicago, IL 60611.

NOMINATIONS SOLICITED FOR TLA BOARD

The Nominating Committee, which consists of Martha Mahard (Chair), Lois McDonald and Donald Fowle, will be meeting in late summer to draw up a slate of candidates for three-year terms (four places) on the Executive Board. TLA members are invited to submit names, including their own, for consideration by the Committee. Please include a brief biographical sketch of approximately four lines for each name submitted. Nominations should be sent to Martha Mahard, 51 Park Drive, #9, Boston, MA 02115, and should reach her no later than August 1.

CONGRES INTERNACIONAL DE THEATRE A CATALUNYA

The International Theatre Congress will be held from May 19 to May 25, 1985, in Barcelona, Spain. The theme will be "Meeting Points for the Theatre of Languages of Greater and Lesser Diffusion." Information on the extensive program being planned may be obtained from the International Theatre Congress in Catalonia, Institut del Theatre, Carrer Nou de la Rambla 3, 08001, Barcelona, Spain.



BOOKS RECEIVED

- Fassbinder, Rainer Werner. *Querelle: The Film Book*. NY: Grove Press, 1983. 180 pp. \$16.95.
- Gillespie, Patti P. and Kenneth M. Cameron. *Western Theatre: Revolution and Revival*. NY: Macmillan, 1984. 575 pp. \$26.95.
- Mortimer, John. *A Voyage Round My Father, The Dock Brief, What Shall We Tell Caroline?* Television edition. NY: Penguin, 1984. 185 pp. \$4.95 (pbk.).
- Vince, Ronald W. *Ancient and Medieval Theatre: A Historiographical Handbook*. Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1984. 156 pp. \$29.95.
- Vince, Ronald W. *Renaissance Theatre: A Historiographical Handbook*. Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1984. 224 pp. \$35.

BOOK REVIEWS

Biographical Dictionary of Dance. By Barbara Naomi Cohen-Stratynier. NY: Schirmer Books, 1982. 970 pp. \$75.

An understanding of dance history is essential to the study of popular theatre. Every vaudeville show worth its ticket price had a tap dance, soft shoe, or eccentric dance act, such as legomania or acrobatic toe dancing. The heyday of spectacular revues featured wave after wave of chorus lines, demonstrating the various skills of the "Broadway technique," as well as exotic interpretive dancers with bare feet and occasionally bare midriffs, ballet specialties, and exhibition ballroom teams. *The Biographical Dictionary of Dance* encompasses a broad range of professional dance, including the popular stage, film and television, and the much-neglected concert stage, in addition to ballet, modern dance, and the polymorphous work of the postmoderns.

Historically, the *Dictionary* reaches back to the sixteenth-century roots of ballet and forward to the loft concerts and Broadway shows of 1980. Cohen-Stratynier's expertise in the traditional areas of dance scholarship is evident. Without neglecting major personalities, the *Dictionary* presents nearly 3,000 dancers, choreographers, and a few related figures, for their individual contributions which are often lost among the generalizations necessary to survey the chronological or stylistic development of an art form. The author's encyclopedic knowledge is put to work highlighting the hitherto unexplored relationships among dancers and the cultural, political and economic climates of their times.

But it is among the entries for performers in the popular fields that the *Dictionary* shows its unusual strength. Entries include Mazie King, "The World's Greatest Novelty Toe Dancer"; revue producer John Murray Anderson's early career as an exhibition ballroom dancer; actor Clifton Webb's fame as a "loose-limbed eccentric dancer"; and many other more and less well-known musical comedy dancers, tappers, striptease artists, acrobats, and film and television choreographers.

There are always errors and omissions in a work of such vast dimensions; corrections and an expanded contents will have to wait for future revisions. For now, the *Biographical Dictionary of Dance* is an informative and entertaining reference book that belongs in the library of every serious dance and theatre scholar.

— Ginnie Cocuzza



The Disreputable Profession: the Actor in Society. By Mendel Kohansky. Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1984. 194 pp. \$29.95.

"Don't put your daughter on the stage..."; from ancient Greece to the present day, the public has considered the acting profession to be at worst disreputable and at best glamorous but less than socially acceptable. Mendel Kohansky's *The Disreputable Profession* is a social history of the actor in Western culture. The paradoxical role of the actor as sinner and saint from social, religious, moral and political perspectives is studied to support the author's theory that actors have always been treated as a group apart, with a mixture of contempt, fascination, and awe.

In Greece, going to the theatre was considered a religious observance. In Rome, the theatre profession progressed from one of infamy to that which spawned the commedia dell'arte during the Great Awakening. In France, Moliere was decried, and later, Rousseau decried the theatre. In Britain, the ascent of the stage is reckoned as the years 1558 through 1642, from the reign of Queen Elizabeth I to the rise of the Puritans. During the Restoration, the shift of emphasis from play to actor began. The first actresses appeared on the British stage, and the bawdy comedy was the dominant form. Kohansky deems the eighteenth century to have been the age of great actors; he talks about many in detail, including Adrienne Lecouvreur and David Garrick. Other actors discussed in detail include Kean, Macready, Irving—the second part of the nineteenth century is described as the era of "knights, courtesans, and matinee idols"; other countries discussed include Russia. The book closes in the 1970's with consideration of salaries and sex-symbols, the rise of movie actors from Theda Bara to Elizabeth Taylor, and the freedom which gave birth to the Living Theater and *Oh! Calcutta!*

Extensive research has produced a book full of carefully preserved anecdotal material as recorded by contemporary chroniclers and gossips. Plato's remark of 2,400 years ago—"The mask they wear may become their face"—is still apt today; as Kohansky says, there are jokes made about Reagan's former profession, but none about those of the teachers or lawyers who run for office! Insight, understanding, and perspective for professionals as well as for laymen are provided in this work.

—Adele Bellinger

Ethnic Theatre in the United States. Edited by Maxine Schwartz Seller. Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1983. 606 pp. \$49.95.

What an amazing diversity of cultures make up the United States! If proof were needed, this volume more than supplies it. There are twenty chapters, alphabetically arranged by ethnic group, each written by

a different scholar well-versed in his field. In each, one finds the history of amateur and professional productions in America, the importance to America (many with a bit too much special pleading), and the relationship to regular American theatre. In addition to end notes, each chapter lists primary and secondary sources. These are especially useful.

The quality of the essays tends to be a bit uneven, since the authors' backgrounds are not always scholarly, with the result that seeming facts are sometimes not scrutinized with care. The chapter on black theatre, for example, is singularly inaccurate, especially in tracing the early years of black theatre and theatrical influence. Other chapters tend to begin capriciously wherever the author finds his strength lies, rather than when the particular ethnic theatre actually began in this country. And no recognition is given to oriental theatre in America, though here, too, lie a people and a tradition.

Aside from these cavils, the volume is an unusual and useful reference work. Almost any future work dealing with almost any aspect of American cultural history should find these chapters a rich lode from which to mine golden ethnic nuggets. Here is an important work for the cultural historian and the sociologist and for the intellectually inquisitive who want to know something of the roots of America's theatrical heritage.

—Julian Mates

Serf Actor: the Life and Art of Mikhail Shchepkin. By Laurence Senelick. Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1984. 305 pp. \$35.

Until the abolition of serfdom in 1861, Russian peasants lived in bondage. Some worked the gentry's land, while others served as their domestic servants. To provide entertainment for themselves as well as to impress each other, some of the gentry began to train their household serfs in the arts. By the end of the eighteenth century serf theatre had become an important cultural phenomenon. The quality varied, reflecting the character of the landowner. Count Wolkenstein, the owner of the Shchepkin family, founded a rather modest serf theatre, but it served to introduce his young serf Mikhail Shchepkin to a world he might have otherwise never known existed.

Shchepkin's father served as Wolkenstein's steward and the family therefore was more privileged than the common serfs. Mikhail was educated to the extent permitted, and became an avid reader. When his talent became apparent he was allowed to divide his time between his duties as secretary to the Count and playing small roles in the provincial theatre in Kursk. Impressed by his abilities, the Governor-General purchased Shchepkin

and his family, and after an uncertain period, they were given their freedom. In 1823 he was invited to join the company of Moscow's Maly Theatre, and thus became a state employee. Although admired as performers, actors in Russia as a class were considered not quite respectable, though better than serfs.

Shchepkin was almost unique among his fellow actors: he learned his lines. This was no mean feat when we consider that during his career he appeared in 600 plays, most only once or twice. His style was naturalistic as opposed to the neo-classical tradition then prevalent. Although he was known for his comic and character roles, he was able to move his audience to tears. Shchepkin's versatility destroyed the *emploi* system, which dictated that one was either a comedian or a tragedian. As a teacher in the State Dramatic School his influence was great. His protege Glikeriya Fyodotova was the teacher of Stanislavsky.

In Moscow Shchepkin was taken up by the intelligentsia. The critics Sergey Aksakov and Vissarion Belinsky became his friends and through their criticism helped him to improve his acting skills and develop a taste for literature. Shchepkin's talent served as a catalyst for Gogol and Turgenev who wrote plays for him to perform, thereby advancing Russian literature. This progress inevitably was grist to the state censor's mill, and there were often long delays and mandated changes before Shchepkin could perform such works in public. Although frustrated, Shchepkin never lost his peasant's faith in the Tsar. In the eyes of such believers, abuses resulted from unworthy representatives of the monarchy, not the system. As a former serf, Shchepkin had a social consciousness, but he was not a revolutionary. Unknown to him, the Tsar's secret police did not perceive him so benignly. Because of his association with men like Belinsky and Alexander Herzen, they kept a dossier on his activities.

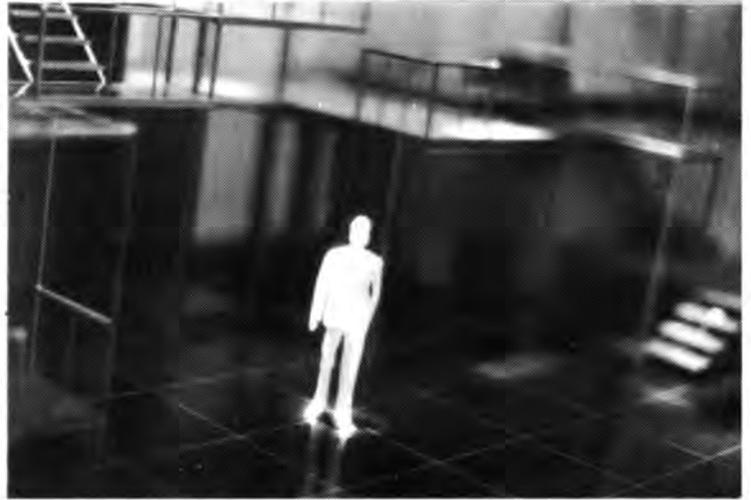
Laurence Senelick's biography of Shchepkin is well-researched and well-written. He has a good grasp of the period. This is not just the biography of an actor, but a fascinating work of social history. Senelick makes a convincing case for the importance of Mikhail Shchepkin to the history of the performing arts and literature.

—Ruth Carr



PLACES PLEASE

The TLA book awards reception was held amidst the splendor of **Places Please: An Exhibition on Broadway's Historic Theatres**. This exhibit, organized by Curator Richard Buck and Associate Curator Alan Pally, was on view from March 20 through May 22, 1984, in the Vincent Astor Gallery of The New York Public Library at Lincoln Center. Fifty-six theatres were celebrated in photographs, set designs, programs, Tony Awards, and other memorabilia. The exhibition was sponsored in part by Save the Theatres, Inc., an organization dedicated to the preservation and landmark designation of Broadway's theatres.



Company set model by Boris Aronson



Hat from *A Chorus Line*

Officers of the **Theatre Library Association** (founded 1937): President, Dorothy L. Swerdlove, Curator, the Billy Rose Theatre Collection, The New York Public Library at Lincoln Center, New York City; Vice-President, Mary Ann Jensen, Curator, the William Seymour Collection, Princeton University Library, Princeton, New Jersey; Secretary-Treasurer, Richard M. Buck, Assistant to the Chief, Performing Arts Research Center, The New York Public Library at Lincoln Center, New York City; Recording Secretary, Brigitte Kueppers, Archivist, Shubert Archive, Lyceum Theatre, New York City.

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