

BROADSIDE

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ROBERT M. HENDERSON, FORMER TLA PRESIDENT, RETIRES FROM NYPL

I was ill during the summer of 1977 and when I got out of the hospital I went to the Library to get my paycheck, before going up to my family to convalesce. I arrived on the Lincoln Center Plaza at about 12:30 on a beautiful August afternoon and found most of the Library staff out there to greet me. "What's all this?" I asked one of my colleagues. "There's a bomb scare," she replied. "Where's my boss?" I said. "Probably at the Amsterdam door," I was told. I went around to Amsterdam Avenue, found Dr. Henderson and told him I needed my check and had to catch a train. He immediately went into his office, opened the safe and brought my check out to me on the street. How many people have had bosses who'd risk being blown to bits for them?

I went to work for Bob Henderson on the fifth of July, 1972. I had been studying up at Fordham University, where under the rather broad umbrella of history of religions I was taking several performing arts courses. I was doing quite a lot of research at Lincoln Center and came to the conclusion that I'd like to work there. I applied for a position, was interviewed at NYPL's Personnel Office and sent up to see Dr. Henderson. His charming, easygoing manner and the depth of his knowledge about the performing arts immediately impressed me. I got the job and was immediately thrust into preparations for a Tracy/Hepburn film festival, which we were doing with Garson Kanin as a fund raiser for the Library. Since that time I've worked on nearly 10,000 events and programs with Bob.

Born in Muskegon, Michigan, a colony of retired circus people and vaudevillians, Bob Henderson's diverse career began long before he came to NYPL. After Navy duty he earned a bachelor's degree

in drama from Michigan State University and a master of fine arts degree in design and directing from Carnegie Technical Institute. His early career was in retail and movie theatre management followed by teaching stints at Adelphi University, American University and William Paterson State College. He earned his Ph.D. in film history from New York University, writing his dissertation on D.W. Griffith.

In 1965, as he was finishing his Ph.D., Dr. Henderson was approached by The New York Public Library to join the staff as Chief of the newly opened performing arts library and museum at Lincoln Center. In the mid-seventies he served as President of the Theatre Library Association. He has received honorary awards from the Polish and Israeli governments and was recently presented with the Charles H. Hackley Distinguished Lecture Award by the Friends of Hackley Public Library in his hometown. When Bob Henderson retired on January 31, 1991, after 25 years as Chief of The New York Public Library's General Library and Museum of the Performing Arts at Lincoln Center, he left a unique legacy of programs, exhibitions and library services. In addition to the planning of major exhibitions related to the performing arts, special events, and many film festivals, Bob oversaw the expansion of much of the performing arts circulating library and the implementation of many new projects.

I am grateful to Bob Henderson for many things. He imparted to me some of his vast education and experience concerning film, theatre management, arts administration and human relations. I will continue to draw on his teaching if I work at the Library for another twenty years. I am, as the entire New York Public Library should be, especially appreciative

that Bob single-handedly raised a considerable sum of money from the Bruno Walter Foundation, thereby helping to make the fund which pays my salary one of the few solvent funds in the Library.

Bob has also been a fount of information about other topics, not related to work but nevertheless fascinating. Thus, I learned quite a lot about the newspaper business—Bob's father had been a newspaperman. I also acquired an amazing amount of information about Poland, and, once when we were having a problem in the Library's basement, I learned a great deal about the mating habits of termites.

Something I have always admired about Dr. Henderson and tried to emulate is his extraordinarily egalitarian nature. Since working for him I've met hundreds of celebrities, including Lotte Lenya, James Cagney, most of the Kennedy family, and the King of Sweden. I think I learned from Bob that the way to deal with these people is not to be star-struck but to treat them with the respect you would accord any individual. That's why I particularly respect Bob—he's never been one of those people who have one set of manners for the rich and famous, another for the staff.

At the end of one of his books about D.W. Griffith, Bob quoted James Agee: "There is not a man working in movies or a man who cares for them who does not owe Griffith more than he owes anybody else." I say, "There is not a man or woman working at The New York Public Library at Lincoln Center or a man or woman who cares for it who does not owe Bob Henderson more than he or she owes anybody else."

—Alan J. Pally

TLA/ASTR CONFERENCE

The annual joint conference of the Theatre Library Association and the American Society for Theatre Research was held at the University of Washington, Seattle, 15-17 November 1991. The theme of the meetings was "Theatre and Historical Change," and sessions were devoted to the following topics: Theatre and the Creation of History; The Power of the Patron; Gender as Historical Agent; Genre as a Medium of Historical Change; Multiculturalism and the Canon (State of the Profession); De-legitimizing the State; and Theatre, War and the Causes of War.

A new feature this year was a series of five small seminars, running concurrently on Saturday morning, and covering Renaissance Theatre, American Theatre, Turn-of-the-Century Theatre, African/South African Theatre, and Post-Cold War Theatre. This made it possible for many more papers to be delivered (and allowed more members to receive university funding as program participants), but it also forced attendees to choose in advance which seminar they would like to attend while foregoing others that might be of equal interest. A questionnaire was distributed at the end of the conference which solicited reactions to the multiple seminar technique in order to determine if this arrangement should be continued and, if so, what if any modifications should be made (e.g., should abstracts of all seminar papers be included in the packets distributed to attendees at registration, so that members would have some idea of the content of seminars that they could not attend).

For the TLA session of the conference, Liz Fugate, Drama Librarian of the University of Washington, organized and chaired an informative panel on regional theatre collections in the area. Speakers included two librarians from the University of Washington and one from the University of Nevada. The discussion took place in the Glenn Hughes Playhouse, named for the founder of UW's School of Drama.

Richard G. Engeman, Photographs and Graphics Librarian at the University, described some of the Library's holdings on theatre in the Pacific Northwest, including print materials and iconography. The WPA Theatre History Project (1936), which was supervised by Glenn Hughes, covered theatre and related entertainments in the Washington area from approximately 1852 to 1900, with

Seattle coverage extending to 1915. Program collections go back to 1868, with comprehensive coverage for 1895-1947. The Pacific Northwest collection also contains an index of regional newspapers and periodicals, various specialized periodicals, and a number of theatrical scrapbooks.

The scrapbooks and other printed materials are complemented by extensive collections of photographs, dating back to the mid-19th century. One of the most important photo collections is that of the late Seattle *Post-Intelligencer* drama critic, J. Willis Sayre. This collection numbers over 24,000 pieces and includes pictures of productions and personalities in theatre, music and film. It covers over fifty years (1900-1955), when Seattle was an important vaudeville center, and it contains publicity photographs from New York, Seattle, Portland and San Francisco. The Sayre collection has been organized and indexed. The images were transferred to an optical videodisc in a special program a few years ago, and the detailed index is accessible through a database.

A. Wilbur (Will) Stevens of the University of Nevada reported on theatrical material housed in Special Collections on two campuses: Las Vegas and Reno. The Las Vegas collections are particularly strong in regard to live shows that have been presented at the various gambling casinos. The Harold Minsky Burlesque archive has detailed records of the shows that he produced in Las Vegas from the 1960s to 1978 when he died. It also includes information on his earlier burlesque shows in other cities (e.g., Jersey City and New York), which came as a gift from Minsky's widow. Minsky also recorded an account of his career for the archive. The Library has also started a Sammy Davis, Jr. collection which is becoming a history of black performers in Las Vegas. Bill Willard, a *Variety* "stringer," is writing a history of Las Vegas entertainment. Another collection at Las Vegas is the Ruth St. Denis-Ted Shawn archive. Most of the theatrical materials at the University of Nevada are located on the Reno campus. There are several collections of playbills for Nevada theatres going back to the 1860s, including a silk program for Topliffe's Theater in 1862, which is the earliest known Nevada imprint, and there are programs from Carson City and Virginia City, which were important theatre centers in the 19th century. The Alfred Doten

papers include diaries for sixty years, 1843-1903, which give details of his theatre-going in California and Nevada. The diaries have been published.

Karyl Winn, librarian in the Manuscripts and University Archives Division of the University of Washington, spoke about some of the major collections in her unit. Theatrical archives cover about 41,000 linear feet. She reiterated a point made earlier by Mr. Engeman, that photographs and graphics are usually removed from the manuscript collections and sent to the Special Collections and Preservation Division. However, there is extensive cross-referencing in the catalogs to lead researchers to both sources.

Ms. Winn gave a brief account of the history of various Seattle theatre companies whose papers are located at the University of Washington, going back to 1919 when the Cornish School of Arts started a theatre school which attracted artists like Martha Graham. An early company was the Seattle Repertory Playhouse, which was associated with the touring Washington State Theater during the 1930s. The Seattle Repertory Theatre, under Stuart Vaughn's direction, was formed in 1963. A Contemporary Theatre (ACT), began operation in 1965, producing modern plays in contrast to the Seattle Rep's classical repertoire. ACT also has an active program of children's theatre, which has its roots in an earlier project in which the Junior League and the University of Washington Drama School participated. There are now 205 theatre groups in Seattle, although there is not much dance or opera.

Ethnic theatre is represented in the records of Harmonien, a theatrical company founded by Danish actress and director Elfrida Pedersen, and in the papers of Swedish actress-playwright Vilma Sundborg. Jewish theatre is documented in the papers of Leon Behar, a director and dramatist, as well as the Seattle Habima Players archive. The Florence James archive includes material about her work with the Federal Theatre Project's negro unit, and composer Earl Robinson's papers contain information on "Ballad for Americans," made famous by Paul Robeson. The Library also houses the records of the University's School of Drama, founded by Glenn Hughes, as well as documentation on three theatres designed by Hughes and his scenic artist, John Conway.

—Dorothy L. Swerdlove

CNLIA

A 1992 Jubilee Celebration is in the planning stage to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the Council of National Library & Information Associations (CNLIA). Founded in 1942, the Council's objectives are "to promote a closer relationship among the national library and information associations of the United States and Canada by providing a central agency to foster cooperation in matters of mutual interest by gathering and exchanging information among its member associations, and by cooperating with learned, professional, and scientific societies in forwarding matters of common interest."

At the May 1991 meeting Dr. David Penniman, president of the Council of Library Resources, delivered the second John T. Corrigan Memorial Lecture entitled "Preparing for Future Information Delivery Systems," in which he described the conflicting philosophies of management that inhibit the transformation of libraries and urged for a set of measurements that place an emphasis on service delivery rather than accumulation of assets.

The December 1991 meeting centered on "Planning and Role-Setting for Libraries: a Comprehensive Management Approach" as presented by Madeline V. Taylor, director of the George F. Smith Library of the Health Sciences at the University of Medicine and Dentistry of New Jersey in Newark.

James B. Poteat and Louis A. Rachow are the current TLA representatives to CNLIA.

BOOK REVIEWS

A History of Hispanic Theatre in the United States: Origins to 1940. By Nicolas Kanellos. Austin: University of Texas Press, 1990. 240 pp. \$15.95.

With the emergence on the West Coast of *Teatro Campesino*—especially in relation to its work in encouraging Chicano fieldworkers in strikes led by Cesar Chavez—a general awareness of the existence of a distinctive Hispanic Theatre in the United States began to form. This is important for a number of reasons, not least because Americans who really love theatre and those who write its histories have too long been ignorant—or uninformed—about the wide range of ethnic theatre activity in the country, even in the 19th century. More needs to be known, for example, about Chinese Theatre in

San Francisco and New York a century ago. In the 1870s and 80s, San Francisco also supported both a French and a German theatre. Today in New York City, Filipino audiences rejoice in productions from the Mother Islands, as well as local stagings. Ultimately, by encouraging audiences to enjoy live theatre, these ethnic offerings contribute to the survival of American theatre.

In California, one hears about Hispanic Theatre most often in the context of "Chicano Studies." This is an academic discipline unknown on the East Coast, where "Puerto Rican Studies" is the Latino choice, though Cubans and Venezuelans could certainly be pardoned for resenting such exclusionary educational policy. The temptation of such a focus to be separatist, even socially divisive, is unfortunate. But that is *not* the rule with contemporary Hispanic ensembles and producing organizations such as *Teatro Campesino*, *Repertorio Espanol*, Puerto Rican Travelling Theatre, and INTAR. They are reaching out, not only to previously neglected Hispanic audiences, but also to the general public, to increase understanding of Latin life and culture.

The companies and productions Nicolas Kanellos chronicles in his absorbing survey of Hispanic theatre activity in America were, of course, primarily playing to audiences for whom Spanish was the language of birth, with English the second tongue. It has been suggested that the first dramatic presentation in what is now the United States was in fact in Spanish, performed by early explorers. It is certain that a Spanish play was presented in Monterey, California, in the late 18th century. In the American Southwest, stretching from Texas to the Pacific shore, Mexican arts and performance have a long tradition.

It is both fascinating and informative to learn about the artists, the audiences, and the entertainments which are part of this tradition, as well as of the Hispanic traditions on the East Coast, in centers such as New York City and Tampa. Some productions aspired highly; others were almost tawdry popular entertainment. In the West, San Antonio and Los Angeles, Kanellos demonstrates, were the most important centers of such theatre activity, but he does note other cities, East and West, which were served by touring troupes and local events. Some vintage photographs enhance the textual evocations of this virtually lost chapter in

American Theatre History.

—Glenn Loney

National Theatre in Northern and Eastern Europe, 1746-1900. Edited by Laurence Senelick. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1991. xxx + 480 pp. Illustrated. \$90.

William Archer learned Dano-Norwegian so that he could scale the heights of Ibsen. Few of us have such intellectual integrity, and fewer still, I suspect, have struggled with Swedish to take the measure of Strindberg, or wrestled with Russian to explore Ostrovsky. Instead, we fall back on translations. We have no such ready access, however, to the documents, newspapers, letters and other sources to flesh out the background against which these dramatists lived and worked.

Laurence Senelick, the general editor of this volume, and his team of experts in Northern and Eastern European Theatre History have provided us with such materials in this book. The Danish theatre excepted, the drama of North-Eastern Europe came into being relatively late. The documents that describe its rise are generally unfamiliar, but they parallel similar documents in English and Western European Theatre history. In their struggle to achieve a national theatre the pioneers were alike in facing government suspicion, public indifference, and never-ending financial problems. The eight sections of this book, covering the rise of the theatre in Denmark, Norway, Sweden, Poland, Bohemia, Hungary, Rumania and Russia, offer us an extraordinary spectrum of materials. Dipping into the volume at random one comes across contemporary sketches of early productions of Ibsen, rules for the conduct of rehearsal, costume inventories, accounts of riots, conflagrations, performances and performers. Inevitably, scholars will question many of the choices. Why include an irrelevant article by Strindberg on Offenbach's *Belle Helene*? Why not include instead a few extracts from the promptbook of William Bloch on the staging of *The Wild Duck* or *An Enemy of the People*?

Nonetheless, this second volume in the Cambridge University Press series of documentary histories of the theatre is very welcome and will offer to most readers much fresh information. Unfortunately, its unconscionable price puts it beyond the reach of many.

—William W. Appleton

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