A STUDY OF MAX REINHARDT'S TREATMENT

OF ENSEMBLE ACTING

APPROVED:

Stanley K. Hamilton
Major Professor

Arthur M. Sanford
Minor Professor

R. V. Holland
Director of the Department of Speech and Drama

Robert B. Toulouse
Dean of the Graduate School

A STUDY OF MAX REINHARDT'S TREATMENT OF ENSEMBLE ACTING

THESIS

Presented to the Graduate Council of the North Texas State University in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements

For the Degree of

MASTER OF ARTS

by

Mary Sue Reid, B.A.
Denton, Texas

January, 1968

TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Modern criticisms of the theatre examine among other things the unity of production. Often there is particular attention to seemingly modern aspects of production. These practices of theatre production, however, were brought to the attention of the world by men such as Max Reinhardt, Gordon Craig, Stanislavsky, and others.

To illustrate this fact, let us examine in brief some recent criticisms by recognized critics in the United States.

Richard Gilman, critic for the Commonweal, states the following about three plays, What Happened, Barefoot in the Park, and Chips With Everything:

> Gertrude Stein's tiny play, What Happened, was without any question a minor masterpiece, more inventive, more high-spirited and more animate than anything I have seen recently at the higher levels of professionalism. Under Lawrence Kornfeld's astute direction, and with splendid music by Al Carmines, the work employs three male singers, a pianist and five female dancers who are called upon for a combination of dance, mime, speech, song and capers, and the best way to describe it is that it has found perfect musical equivalents for Gertrude Stein's

incantatory cliche-overturning language. A triumph of total theatre, What Happened was the most hopeful even this increasingly desperate pilgrim of the theatrical apocalypse has witnessed in many a week, month, and even year. [1]

Barefoot in the Park was a tremendous success. . . . Broadway is always feverishly searching for a play like this one. . . . The cast was almost brilliant in its deftness and ability to fill out comic lines with exactly illuminating movement. [2]

Arnold Wesker's Chips With Everything was a delightful play. . . . John Dexter, director has created a pattern of direction that could not have been improved upon. It keeps language in balance with movement, imposes a line of controlled and rhythmic physicality, maintains a beautifully accurate pace and offers a sensuous texture which is a long way from the gimmickry and visual extravagance of so many Broadway plays these days. . . . Dexter's cast is a splended instrument of his will. [3]

In the New York Theatre Critics Reviews, Douglas Watt gives his criticism of the following productions:

Galileo is very likely Bertolt Brecht's best play. Anthony Quayle gives the title role the voice and passion and shrewdness it requires and the others in the very large cast John Hirsch has directed so well rise to the demands appealing. . . . The play has been handsomely set and beautifully costumed to make the production a united performance. [4]

---

[1] Richard Gilman, "The Stage," Commonweal, LXXIX (November, 1963), 227.

[2] Ibid., p. 226.

[3] Ibid., pp. 139-141.

[4] Douglas Watt, New York Theatre Critic's Reviews, XXVIII (April, 1967), p. 326.

> After all these years, War and Peace has finally reached Broadway. The stage version of Tolstoy's massive novel is a remarkable affair in its own right. . . . There are marvelous players and director Ellis Rabb has maneuvered them acutely.[5]

Lee Silver states his view about the performance of Romeo and Juliet in Theatre Critics Reviews:

> The Bristol Old Vic's Romeo and Juliet, presented at the City Center last night is a stylish and engrossing production. What distinguishes this Romeo and Juliet is its well-wrought, well-balanced ensemble performances.[6]

These productions are some that have pleased the critics. However, when the production does not please the critics, Rogoff wrote as follows:

> If the challenge could be met only by way of the central performance, then the new production of the play directed by John Gielgud would be a rare triumph indeed. . . . On Broadway Richard Burton's Hamlet stands alone on a "rehearsal" stage almost entirely populated by a dull band of strolling players who barely manage to walk through their parts. The only excuse for such casting and the tediously neutral performances is the excuse based on a fallacy: that grey roles should be played by grey actors. . . . Gielgud neatly sidesteps interpretations, thus giving some muddy-mettled actors an opportunity to do their imitations of acting with impunity.[7]

---

[5] Ibid., p. 338.

[6] Lee Silver, "Romeo and Juliet," Theatre Critics Reviews, XXVIII (February, 1967), p. 351.

[7] Gordon Rogoff, "The Stage," Commonweal, LXXX (May, 1964), p. 177.

This criticism, positive and negative, is representative of a type of criticism which is accepted by the public and teachers of theatre. This thesis will be an attempt to study the contribution of Max Reinhardt's ensemble acting which has influenced such judgments, although Reinhardt had a tremendous effect on other phases of the theatre as well. There have been books and articles written on the other aspects of his work. For example, there have been two American books, each giving a biographical sketch of Max Reinhardt: Huntly Carter, The Theatre of Max Reinhardt, 1914; Oliver M. Saylor, Max Reinhardt and His Theatre, 1926. A number of articles have been written about Reinhardt as a director and producer, but no one has gathered together the material concerning his treatment of ensemble acting. Therefore, it is the purpose of this thesis to show that he made a definite contribution to the theatre through ensemble acting.

In 1914 Robert Edmond Jones, while watching the repertory of Max Reinhardt's Deutsches Theatre, became aware of the technique of organizing a production then known as "the new stagecraft"--the fusion of acting, lighting, and setting into a dramatic whole.

A year later he made his professional debut in New York with the successful setting and costumes for The Man Who Married a Dumb Wife.[8]

Winthrop Ames, Broadway producer, also supported the theory that the American stage has been influenced by the European principles when he stated:

> We are likely nowadays to think of the art theatre movement as the work of amateurs almost exclusively. This is a mistaken notion. . . . It was on the professional stage of New York that the earliest and most significant European innovations were introduced to American audiences.[9]

One of the men who was responsible for introducing these European innovations to America was Max Reinhardt. He holds one of the foremost places in the development of the modern art theatre, yet one of the most disputed ones.

Reinhardt was known all over the world for his excellent ensemble acting, which tended to make production a united performance. Parallel to the period in which Reinhardt achieved success with his ensemble, the star-system of England was at its height.

Max Reinhardt considered his work with the actor

---

[8] Lee Simonson, "Legacy," The Theatre of Robert Edmond Jones (Middleton, 1958), p. 18.

[9] John H. Jennings, "Winthrop Ames' Notes For The Perfect Theatre," Educational Theatre Journal, XII (March, 1960), 9-15.

as the most important part of the process, and all of his actors were successful in the ensemble. The art theatres have profited by his use of ensemble, and ensemble acting is still used today throughout the country.

In order to understand Reinhardt's position among the leading art theatre contributors, it is necessary to examine the seed from which he sprang, to look at the environmental forces at work in the molding of his view of the theatre, not only in the country of his birth, but also in that of his adoption, Germany.

For a proper background, material concerning Meiningen's, Craig's, and Brahm's ensemble acting will be examined and an attempt will be made to determine if their methods influenced Reinhardt.

An insight into his methods may help to erase any doubt about his position among the leaders of the art theatre movement. His preparation for an individual play and the study of the play, his philosophy in regard to ensemble acting, his management and training of the actor, his methods of casting and rehearsals will be studied, and it is hoped that these methods will help to delineate his contribution to theatre.

Finally, conclusions will be drawn concerning his contribution to the theatre through the ensemble.

To understand Reinhardt's contribution to the development of the theatre, one must first understand the definition of ensemble acting. This method of acting has been one of the most highly praised methods of acting in the theatre for well over two generations. In one guise or another, it has attracted the attention of many serious theatre students of the present century. It seems to have been almost unanimously accepted as a desirable feature of modern play production if one may judge by the printed opinions that have appeared over the years.

Sheldon Cheney defines ensemble acting:

> As it concerns the actors, the scene builders, the electricians and the other workers on the stage, the search for unity means that they must always be obedient to the will of the director, working sympathetically, "with answering minds," to evoke the one desired impression. The actor may enjoy a certain latitude of interpretation, but it must always be within such limitations that it will not disturb the ensemble as visualized by the artist-director. [10]

---

[10] Sheldon Cheney, "The Most Important Thing in the Theatre," Theatre Arts Magazine, I (1917), 168.

In his book, The Art of Acting, John Dolman says:

> In the art of acting today--if not always in "show business"--teamwork (or team play, as Sir Henry Irving called it) has become a major concern. It is not that teamwork has become more important than individual acting; it is rather that the two have become less distinguishable, and that the excellence of individual acting is now more likely to be judged in terms of teamwork. The best actor is no longer the one whose temperamental outbursts, varying nightly, surprise and startle the other actors out of their composure, scare nervous people into hysterics, and compel tumultuous applause, interrupting the play, as an escape valve for emotional tension. It is rather the actor who, in perfect cooperation with his fellows, can help make a play seem true, vital, or stirring, night after night, with sure artistry and fine sincerity. [11]

Most of the prevailing attitudes toward and definitions of ensemble are stated or implied in the above quotations, and it is everywhere agreed that the total effect of the whole takes precedence over the individual effectiveness of any of the parts.[12]

---

[11] John Dolman, The Art of Acting (New York, 1949), p. 93.

[12] Ibid., p. 93.

CHAPTER II

MAX REINHARDT: THE MAN

Austria, with its colorful landscape, its Romanesque, Gothic, Baroque, and Rococo architecture, its castles and monasteries of great antiquity, its precious treasure of art, its immortal music, and its time-rooted appreciation for the theatre is the soil from which Max Reinhardt sprang. He was born of a genial, pleasure-loving warmhearted, sensitive people. He was reared in a country that fostered and developed the fine arts from earliest times. For generations the Austrian peasants had been accustomed to some form of acting, from their native dance to the modern theatre. The theatre of the Austrians is not merely a place of amusement, but it is the center around which their intellectual life revolves. "And even to the most frivolous Viennese, who is never serious about anything, the theatre is holy ground." [1]

---

[1] Oliver M. Saylor, Max Reinhardt and His Theatre (New York, 1926), p. 32.

Reinhardt adopted a North German environment, Berlin, from which he said that he learned three things: "(1) The secret of work, which is perhaps more foreign to the Austrian than to any other people or nation; the pleasure of work which is of most decisive importance in art and the theatre. (2) Something which only northern people have (in contrast to the Italian or Latin manner): a restrained, impenetrable, economical way of playing, which happened to be very near my own nature and at the same time of great significance for the northern literature arising at that time. This was also the key to the production of Shakespeare. (3) Northern literature, then new, Ibsen, Hauptmann, Strindberg."[2] Berlin, the capital of Prussia, was surrounded with an atmosphere of military discipline revolting to the English, French, American, and other nations, yet one that made every minute in the march of progress count. It had that driving power that accomplishes, that does not put off until tomorrow what it can do today. In contrast to the Austrians, the Germans were serious-minded, particularly the North Germans, who took their pleasures seriously. It was not an uncommon sight to see a German theatre at four o'clock in the afternoon half filled with

---

[2] Oliver M. Saylor, Max Reinhardt and His Theatre (New York, 1926), p. 187.

people, who, in order to get good seats, brought lunches and waited for the play to begin and then sat three or four hours longer through a Shakespearean tragedy with genuine appreciation and enjoyment. It was not uncommon to see many of these same people sit through a long performance of Sophocles, Ibsen, or Goethe the next night. The statistics of the German Shakespeare Society often showed as many as three thousand performances of Shakespeare yearly. Their repertory programs were filled with the classics of every nation, and their theatres were filled to the doors every night.

They had a passion for thoroughness and accuracy unknown in any other country. It was this that caused them to build the much criticized heavy machinery, solid foundations, and lasting structure. It was this passion that made them build the permanent theatre in preference to the perishable one. It gave their art a heaviness which was in direct contrast to the lightness of touch in the art of the Austrians and South Germans.

They had an insatiate thirst for investigating every new theory and testing it to the limits of its practicality. For that reason, extremes in every movement in drama, acting or stagecraft had been staged in the German theatre. For instance, nowhere was expressionism carried to such extremes. Expressionism,

although it was a world-wide movement, was often called "German expressionism." By that phrase was meant the most violent form of expressionism, both in drama and in stagecraft. Every theory in the German theatre had run its full gamut of expression.

Max Reinhardt added many of these qualities to his own characteristics of enormous, untiring energy; restless ambition; strong personality; emotional intellectuality; modesty; sensitiveness to color, movement, and sound; delight in dancing and fantasy; and appreciation of color and line in art; the baroque or simple in architecture; the medieval, modern or classic in drama; and added to these, the power of organization and a business sense--two qualities so frequently absent in the worker of art.

Born with the Austrian creative impulse and adopting the North German habits of work, Max Reinhardt entered upon a theatrical field that had buried in it years of experiment and practice and faced an audience which regarded the theatre as one of its most vital educational institutions, as a refuge from the ills and woes of life and as a shrine for spiritual uplift.

Max Reinhardt was born Max Goldman at Baden near Vienna on the ninth of September, 1873. He was the son of a middle class merchant who wished his boy to follow

in the same career. Max, however, had an intense love of the theatre, and at eighteen, after giving up his banking job, he avidly studied for the stage under Emil Burde at the Vienna Conservatorium.[3]

According to a feature article by John B. Kennedy in Collier's Magazine, Max Goldman adopted the name of Reinhardt because his parents thought his choice of profession would bring their name into disrepute.

Kennedy writes thus of Reinhardt's first professional appearance:

> Supers with bears were required for a Germanized performance of Rip Van Winkle. Max Reinhardt joined the line at the stage door, was rejected because of his youth, hurried to a costume shop, hired a gray wig and beard, made up, returned to the stage door and was promptly accepted. [4]

After playing a short time on the Viennese stage, in 1893 Reinhardt appeared in the Stadt Theatre in Salzburg. It was customary in those days for actors to buy their parts. The larger the part, the more it cost. As Reinhardt had little money, he could afford only the very small old-man-character part in Schiller's Die Räuber. It was while he was playing this theatre

---

[3] Huntly Carter, The Theatre of Max Reinhardt (New York, 1914), p. 57.

[4] John B. Kennedy, "Max Reinhardt," Collier's Magazine, LXXXI (January, 1928), 24.

that Otto Brahm, founder of the Freie Buhne and the foremost exponent of naturalism in Germany, visited Salzburg. It was here that Otto Brahm, director of the Deutsches Theatre at that time, discovered in Reinhardt outstanding material as an interpreter of old character roles. Brahm instantly sensed that the young character actor had most unusual qualities worthy of special notice and so he engaged him for his theatre in Berlin. So it was that Reinhardt left Salzburg in 1894 to go to the city to play in the Deutsches Theatre, the center of a new literary movement which featured Ibsen, Hauptman, and the German naturalists. Here Reinhardt played successfully the character parts of old men.

Now Reinhardt had the opportunity to study the conscientious following of a theory--a theory of acting and stage setting which evolved consistent, if somewhat drab, and now and then uninspired, productions, for, on the whole, the Deutsches Theatre was superior to the other German stages.[5]

At the Deutsches Theatre in Berlin, Reinhardt formed a habit of following carefully and rehearsing privately the parts played by the leading actors. Before long his habit proved to be a very fruitful one.

---

[5] Huntly Carter, op. cit., p. 58.

One night when an actor by the name of Muller, who was playing the part of the old skipper in Hauptmann's play, The Beaver Coat, committed suicide, Reinhardt was ready to play the part and was given the opportunity to "go on." From that time leading parts were assured him. "Ibsen's old man Folda, Hauptman's Baumert in The Weavers, Tolstoy's Akin in The Power of Darkness, the depraved cabinet maker Engstrand in Ibsen's Ghosts, the philosophic Mortensgard in Ibsen's Rosmersholm, the old skipper in Hauptmann's The Beaver Fur, the moody headmaster Stormer in Dreyer's Probationers--these were some of the roles that Reinhardt created." [6]

Reinhardt also joined the Freie Bühne, a dramatic institution, which afforded him opportunities to play more and varied roles and to acquire craftsmanship. His association with this society was terminated when he felt that the group was at a standstill since it was doing merely photographic naturalistic shows, comparable to the Belasco productions in America.

In 1901, Reinhardt's interest was attracted to the cabaret movement, and it was he who was mainly responsible for instituting the "after-theatre" theatre, the intimate revue. This was first performed as a theatre called the "Brille."

---

[6] Ibid., p. 57.

> The 'Brille' was conducted privately with only members, mostly comedians and their friends, being allowed to participate in the sing-songs and the Bohemian entertainment directed by Reinhardt. It was here that Reinhardt first became obsessed with the idea of intimacy.[7]

Here he began to work as director and here he discovered and trained talented young actors, such as Gertrud Eysoldt, Rosa Bertens, and Emanuel Reicher and began gathering about him his world-famous ensemble.

The audiences became too large to be accommodated in "Die Brille," so Reinhardt looked for new quarters, which he found in the "Kunsterhaus and which he converted into the "Schall und Rauch" in 1901.

This cabaret also won the interest of the public, while vaudeville, consisting of social satires in one act, unusual song and dance acts, parodies of well-known authors, developed Reinhardt's personality and capabilities. Carter states, "Vaudeville had played its essential part in the long course of preparation Reinhardt was undergoing. It was necessary that the comic not less that the dramatic instinct should be fully developed in him."[8] Throughout the "Schall und Rauch" period, Reinhardt remained under the formative influence of Brahm.

---

[7] Ibid., p. 40.

[8] Ibid., p. 42.

The "schall und Rauch" was transformed in 1902 into an intimate theatre, the Kleines. Here Reinhardt inaugurated his career as a producer of serious plays. Success came rapidly with productions of Strindberg, Oscar Wilde, Wedekind, and Gorky. Oscar Wilde's Salome was banned from public performance, but Reinhardt showed his alertness by doing the play as a private production with an extraordinarily fine cast. Huntly Carter states, "The effectiveness of this production staggered the audiences of Berlin and inspired the Salome opera by Richard Strauss. It contained the precious life-blood of artistic inspiration."[9]

In January, 1903, Reinhardt came to the parting of the ways with Brahm and left his ensemble so that he could concentrate all his abilities upon directing. In the spring of the same year he took upon himself the added responsibility of the Neues Theatre. Here he began to give full expression to his talent for play-production. In these two theatres, the Kleines and the Neues, he produced from 1902 to 1905 an international repertoire including plays by Tolstoy, Chekhov, Ibsen, Bjornson, Lessing, Schiller, Euripides, Shakespeare, and Shaw.

---

[9] Ibid., p. 43.

Up to this time Reinhardt had been absorbed in naturalistic acting, but now he changed his methods and devoted himself to the realistic revival in Berlin. According to Saylor, Reinhardt had too clear an eye, too much imagination, too much inborn longing for movement, change, surprise, to tolerate for any length of time the monotony and drabness of naturalism.[10]

Reinhardt had been trained in Brahm's school of realism and the Freie Bühne's school of naturalism. He tasted Vallentin's post-naturalism. He studied Maeterlinck's and Ibsen's symbolism and Shakespeare's romance, and decided that in a combination of these various elements must lie a means of expressing the soul of the drama by appealing to the eye instead of the ear. To work out this new principle he chose Maeterlinck's Pelleas and Melisande, which he produced with a large measure of success. Berlin felt that a new spirit had entered the theatre with Reinhardt. This production was given on April 3, 1903, two years before Craig's first theories on living theatre were published.

---

[10] Oliver M. Saylor, Max Reinhardt and His Theatre (New York, 1926), p. 41.

Reinhardt's initial production of A Midsummer Night's Dream in 1905 spread his fame throughout Germany and gave him his first taste of great success. It was a revelation. Berlin was jubilant. Reinhardt had not added a word; he had not cut a line. And yet, it seemed a new play entirely. Full of life, color, music and joy, it had a message that did away in one evening with all the voluptuous pessimism and sordidness of the preceding fifteen or twenty years of naturalism. Through the whole season, the Neues Theatre was besieged by multitudes clamoring for seats, and there was no French bedroom farce, no Viennese musical comedy, no Hungarian melodrama, that could compete with this or the following Shakespearean productions in their popular appeal. A Midsummer Night's Dream made Reinhardt famous. It inaugurated a new period in German literature.[11]

In the autumn of 1905 Reinhardt took over the most influential theatre in Berlin, the Deutsches, from Lindau, Brahm's successor. Shortly after he assumed control of this famous theatre, Reinhardt established a school for actors from which he could

---

[11] Ibid., pp. 7-8.

cast his plays and establish a more or less permanent repertory company. The repertory system was not new, but the modern form of Reinhardt's system was not the same as the old or "stock" one. Carter states,

> The modern repertory system has a great advantage over the old systems in being better organized, and in providing a response to the demand by dramatic societies in large centres for an appropriate expression of the life and customs of such centres. . . . Perhaps its chief good consists in affording players constant practice in a great number and variety of characters, thus opening up a valuable training ground to them, and thereby developing many remarkable talents; and beyond this in developing ensemble acting in the country, whereby the player is enabled so to project his part into the play as to become part of a whole, and yet so to project himself into the character which he is interpreting that his own individuality becomes merged in the interpretation. [12]

Oliver Saylor writes about the new director of the Deutsches:

> In 1905, Adolph L'Arronge chose Max Reinhardt as the new director for the Deutsches Theatre. At the Deutsches Theatre he turned his attention to improvement in organization--one of his greatest contributions to the modern art theatre--to the presentation of and experimentation with every conceivable type of play, whether it was realistic, symbolic, expressionistic, or combinations of these types, invention of mechanical devices, and above all to his actors. [13]

---

[12] Carter, op. cit., pp. 178-180.

[13] Saylor, op. cit., pp. 42-43.

After taking over the Deutsches Theatre, Reinhardt relinquished the Kleines Theatre and retained the Neues Theatre for a season longer. At the Deutsches Theatre he continued to widen his policy, and Reinhardt gradually began to touch his highest development as a producer. Here he focused on organization and made the theatre a cosmopolitan centre for English, Belgian, Austrian, German, Russian, and Scandinavian players. Reinhardt widened the scope of symbolical representation and interpretation, and he provided a framework for plays which was intended to invest realistic forms with a symbolic meaning, for instance, two empty thrones occupying an empty stage, and placed face to face, so as to suggest a universe divided against itself. Reinhardt also stimulated the invention of mechanical devices, which added materially to the resources of one of the best equipped theatres in Europe.[14]

To get at the problem of creating a more intimate relation between actor and audience, Reinhardt built in 1906 another small theatre, the Kammerspielhaus, out of the dance hall adjoining the "Deutsches."

This auditorium had a seating capacity of only three hundred people and a space of only three feet between stage and spectators. This hall without

---

[14] Carter, op. cit., p. 50.

galleries was beautifully furnished and elaborately decorated. Here Reinhardt produced plays of new playwrights and plays that appealed to a limited, cultured audience. His main purpose in building the Kammerspiele was to create a new relation between the actor and his public, between the stage and the auditorium, to intensify the contact, to erect a broader and stronger bridge between the two.[15] Here he built up his mighty acting ensemble by giving inexperienced actors an opportunity to play leading parts before appearing on the stage of the "Deutsches."

In his book, Max Reinhardt and His Theatre, Saylor states:

> Every actor of Reinhardt's ensemble knew that it was one thing to play at the Kammerspiele, and another to play at the Deutsches Theatre, and something still different to play in the Grosses Schauspielhaus Theatre. What, at the Kammerspiele, is a mere relaxation of the fingers, must become a motion of the hand at the Deutsches Theatre, a lifting of the arm in the Grosses Schauspielhaus. A clearly pronounced word at the Kammerspiele has no accent at the Deutsches Theatre, and becomes a whisper in the Grosses Schauspielhaus.[16]

---

[15] Saylor, op. cit., p. 148.

[16] Ibid., p. 149.

Reinhardt will always be remembered for his unexampled loyalty to the unknown actor. From first to last he helped those who stood looking in at the window of the theatre for chances which no one would offer them.[17]

The two theatres, Deutsches and Kammerspielhaus, where the actors performed had three points of general interest. They were examples of theatres run on a very successful commercial and artistic basis, perfectly equipped and organized, and efficiently worked on the repertory system. The chief historical importance of the Deutsches Theatre was that it was a private theatre, not a subsidized one. It was a convincing proof that it was possible to conduct a theatre on artistic lines, although the other theatres operated solely for money. The Deutsches was really the intermediate theatre, which demonstrated that it was possible to conduct a paying theatre on artistic lines. One of Reinhardt's first innovations in the Deutsches Theatre was the revolving stage, with its endless possibilities. Another outstanding feature was the ingenious mechanical contrivances by which electricity was extensively drawn upon in a well-organized lighting system. The lighting system at the Deutsches attracted attention everywhere.[18]

---

[17] Carter, op. cit., p. 51.

[18] Ibid., p. 177.

The idea of intimacy in the very small house made Reinhardt want to experiment with a similar relationship in the very large theatre. He was also thinking in terms of the Greek theatre. Consequently, in 1910, he converted the Circus Schumann into a huge arena theatre. At one end of this building he erected the front of a temple before which actors in great numbers appeared. Around this acting space on the other three sides of the building he placed banks of seats for the spectators. Here he revived Greek tragedy and worked out his famous productions of Sumurun and The Miracle, which he presented in London the following year and later in America; these productions turned the eyes of the world toward the German theatre.

The war interfered with his plans for building a "Theatre of the five thousand." With the coming of peace, however, this great new theatre began to take shape. In 1920, he opened the Grosses Schauspielhaus to throngs of warworn, theatre-hungry people in Germany and to directors and critics from all over the world.[19]

---

[19] Saylor, op. cit., pp. 153-155.

Reinhardt's aim in building the Grosses Schauspielhaus was not to dethrone the existing theatre forms, the Deutsches and the Kammerspiele. His desire was to have stages which could be used where that theatre form did not suffice. He intended for the performances in the Grosses Schauspielhaus to be something festive--out of the ordinary.

Reinhardt's theatres did not cease with his Berlin theatres, which he left to their own resources in 1921, for wherever Reinhardt went, he took the theatre with him.[20] In his theatres, Reinhardt's ambition was to show life in all its manifestations. His aim was to create and place the best theatrical art obtainable which was the combined art of the dramatist, stage director, painter, musician, and actor. However, he considered the actor the center and cornerstone of theatrical art.

The scope of Reinhardt's activities seemed unlimited. He was the first German producer who was ever invited to produce plays in foreign countries. He produced plays by writers of every country.

---

[20] Ibid., p. 149.

Reinhardt was not a man of one idea, although most certainly a man of one purpose. Style, as such, never had an appeal for him. Reinhardt was never a follower of the realistic, the impressionistic, or the expressionistic style; he took points from each of them, and he molded them to his own use. Just because of that, he, on his part, gave a great deal of stimulus to the art movement.[21]

It was impossible to trace a sort of straight stylistic development in Reinhardt's art. He did not let himself be pinned down. He seemed to be a realist one day, a stylist the next day, and both at the same time on the day after. The only thing that he really sought was to show life in all its manifestations, its roundness, its movement, its colors, and its music.

> Reinhardt's material was the theatre. Not the dramatist alone, not the actor; neither of the two must dominate. The poet's work and the actor; the latter's dynamic power and his reserve, his voice and his silence; and music; and paintings; and dancing; and the building, with all its potential qualities; and the audience, with all its sensitiveness. All these made up his material.[22]

Reinhardt introduced innumerable stage devices and lighting appliances, but they always remained

---

[21] Carter, op. cit., p. 54.

[22] Ibid., p. 80.

strictly subordinated to the organic necessities of the play, and were never permitted to deteriorate into tricks and stunts. In some of the comedies of Molière and Shakespeare he used curved bridges, gangways, passages, stairs, to accentuate movements, utilizing all three dimensions of the space at his disposal. However, Reinhardt's vision was not obscured by his own mechanical devices, by his runways, steps, bridges, revolving stages, aprons, spotlights, and the like. He was the past master of stage mechanics, but he never permitted his tools to master him.

Reinhardt's importance as a producer comprised several factors: he built the theatre on its own true foundations; he mastered, in the widest sense, his material--the theatre; he found a new and individual connection with the dramatist's work. He succeeded in expressing his own personality and his own experiences in the creation of a real world.[23]

In regard to Reinhardt as a producer, Carter states the following:

> It may be that no definite style will remain which one can call 'Reinhardt style' only because every one of his works has a style of its own, its inherent style.

---

[23] Ibid., p. 88.

> In all probability, this will be the style of the future: a style conceived from out of the individuality of the work and its author, a style created by disregard of tradition. Today, Reinhardt is the most powerful creator of the 'living theatre.' He is not an academic manager, nor the vainglorious tyrant who refuses to acknowledge the independent individuality of an actor. But he yields to that individuality only in the service of the ensemble, to which he gives his own individual stamp and that of the art of the theatre, an art which he elevated from one that serves to one that reigns. . . .[24]

Max Reinhardt was one of the most picturesque actor-directors of the modern theatre. From his first productions on his own stage until the end of his life Reinhardt was thoroughly eclectic in the choice of plays, the style of production, acting techniques, and even in the selection of theatres.[25]

Professor Friedrich von der Leyen of Germany had this to say about Reinhardt:

> Every one of Reinhardt's performances that I have seen stands out in my memory. The daring joy with which he masters new problems, manifold in character and always growing in difficulty; the genuine effort he devotes to solving every one of them, from the standpoint of its individual laws and claims--these traits must refresh every spectator. It is not in Reinhardt's nature ever to rest on his laurels or to do anything

---

[24] Ibid., p. 327.

[25] Toby Cole and Helen Krich Chinoy, Actors on Acting (New York, 1949), pp. 273-274.

> without giving it full care and attention. He has his own way of assimilating and studying and carefully working out every scene and every line of a play. The great number of ideas we owe to him has always been elucidating, never confusing. He more than satisfies the claims of the moderns; his art threw a new and surprising light on the classics which filled us with curiosity and admiration. . . .[26]

Huntly Carter in his book, The Theatre of Max Reinhardt, said:

> It seems as though Reinhardt has never considered a piece unplayable. The more difficult the play to be produced, the more boldly he has emerged. He embodies, in fact, the modern militant spirit - a spirit marked by audacity and fighting force. No one in this century has expressed this spirit in the theatre more persistently and thoroughly, exhibiting a certain kind of unchained energy that made progress meteoric but certain. As a dynamic figure, as a revolutionary who has fired all cultural points in a vigorous endeavor to exalt the Will of the Theatre, where of recent years emotionless intellect has alone been enshrined, in his effort to bring himself face to face with a new theatrical world . . . he probably has no equal in the contemporary theatre.[27]

Reinhardt's relentless enthusiasm, energy, and achievements in his theatrical labors have prompted Oliver Saylor to write:

> I can only say with the rest of the world--that Reinhardt has without question

---

[26] Professor Friedrich von Der Leyen, Oliver Saylor's Max Reinhardt and His Theatre (New York, 1926), p. 333.

[27] Carter, op. cit., pp. 46-47.

> the greatest theatrical mentality of all time from the practical working point of view. For no one has produced volume and theatrical quantity in a more marvelous way than he . . . [28]

Reinhardt's purpose was to show life in all its manifestations. He sought to give every play its individual character, style, and its own atmosphere. Reinhardt considered the actor the most important part of a production, and he wanted above all to have a perfect ensemble of which he was the leader, not the dictator.

---

[28] Sayler, op. cit., p. 96.

CHAPTER III

INFLUENCES ON REINHARDT

Saxe-Meiningen

Georg II, Duke of Saxe-Meiningen, is generally conceded to have been the first to give ensemble work pre-eminent consideration in the theatre. With his director, Ludwig Chronegk, and his wife, the former actress, Ellen Franz, he established in the minor principality of Saxe-Meiningen a company which focused world-wide attention on ensemble acting. In 1874 the troupe went to Berlin, where it created a sensation with its productions marked by excellent ensemble playing, by historical accuracy in costuming, and by an artistic and vital interrelationship between the movements of the actors and the decor.

Meiningen's concepts of ensemble acting were revolutionary in his day, and they burst like an electric storm in a theatrical climate which was concerned almost exclusively up until that time with the problems of the individual actor. True, there

were in Europe other men who were dissatisfied with the existing state of the theatre, but here suddenly was an active group dedicated to doing something about it. In an article entitled "The Actor in the Ensemble," written for an issue of Deutsche Buehne, the Duke included some of the principles which governed his work.

> (1) The stage must always depict movement, the continuous unfolding of the story. (2) . . . The actor must never stand dead center, directly in front of the prompter, but always slightly to the left or right of his box. (3) The middle foreground of the stage, about the width of the prompter's box, from the footlights to the background, should be considered by the actor merely as a passage-way from right to left or vice-versa; otherwise, he has no business there. (4) Likewise, two actors should avoid standing in similar relation to the prompter's box. (5) One should give special attention, also, to the relative position of the actor and the scenery. That relation must be correct. (6) . . . It is obligatory that the actors rehearse in costume even before the dress rehearsal, which differs from the opening night only by the exclusion of the public. . . . The actor should not, by his appearance or gestures give the impression of wearing some costume the wardrobe mistress has just handed him; one must not be reminded of a costume ball or a carnival. [1]

His artistic nature sought new and distinctively modern expression. In a letter addressed to his Intendent in 1862 Duke Georg expressed the philosophy

---

[1] Toby Cole and Helen Krich Chinoy, Actors on Acting (New York, 1949), p. 265.

which guided his stage craft.

> Artists are nothing; art alone has worth; that is to say, only the artist who promotes art as such for the benefit of mankind is worth our support. On that other artist, however, the one who approaches art with frivolity and uses it merely to delude the public - on him we should make war, to prevent him from doing harm. [2]

Meiningen outlined his new directorial concepts--concepts which would give to the mise en scene a verisimilitude that had not been known before.

Much of what Meiningen said sounds naive and childishly simple today; but it must be remembered that practically every one of these ideas was in direct violation of some existing tradition of the time, and that, taken as a whole, they represent one of the most daring revolutions in the history of the theatre. Meiningen's concept of ensemble acting seems to have been limited to the view that it must conform strictly to the over-all plan of the director. It did not involve any of the more sophisticated aspects which developed later. Meiningen was an autocratic tyrant and ruled his troupe with an iron hand. Never before was discipline in the theatre known to have been so severe and so complete.

---

[2] Max Grube, The Story of the Meininger (Florida, 1964), p. 1.

Lee Simonson writes enthusiastically of the Duke of Saxe-Meiningen:

> His career inaugurated a new epoch in theatrical production and made the subsequent development of modern stage craft possible because he convinced every important director in Europe that the fundamental problem to be answered by the scene designer is not: 'What will my setting look like and how will my actor look in it?' but 'What will my setting make the actor do?' . . . the dynamic relation of a mobile actor and an immobile setting in continuous interaction was an accepted axiom. [3]

The following tribute to Duke Georg II appears in the introduction to the University of Miami's edition of Grube's book:

> If the Duke of Saxe-Meiningen did not inaugurate Twentieth Century stage craft himself, he may be considered the most significant influence on those directors who did. He made every European director conscious that scenery must be designed to fit the movements of actors, that costumes, properties, lighting must contribute to the creation of the mood and atmosphere of the stage picture; and that no detail of interpretation or stage business was so small that it was not worth careful research, planning and rehearsal. . . . Duke Georg II established the supremacy in the modern theatre of the Regisseur--the director who unifies the production through his complete control of every moment of the actor's interpretation and movements, and every detail of setting, lighting, costuming, and make-up. [4]

---

[3] Lee Simonson, The Stage Is Set (New York, 1932), p. 272.

[4] Max Grube, op. cit., p. xi.

After their initial conquest of Berlin in 1874 the company performed throughout Germany. Wherever they went they became the inspiration for theatrical reform.

An example of Meiningen's success was found in Twelfth Night. Fritz Freiherr von Ostini writes:

> The performance of Twelfth Night staged by Julius Diez, from the Meiningen school, showed in an exemplary manner just what the Artists' Theatre can do. The whole thing was an artistic unity in the finest style and the work of the painter was indissolubly mingled with that of the regisseur. The most beautiful and artistic pictures coincided exactly with the best scenes of the performance. The individual figures stood out in a wonderfully plastic manner, and one thing in particular was typical: the whole procession of pictures appeared colorful, indeed sumptuous, in spite of the simplification and stylization of the scene. There was no puritanical restraint to annoy. There was, indeed, as much illusion as if offered by the richest of naturalistic productions of the previous theatrical style. [5]

Many managers and regisseurs have tried their hand at Shakespeare's gaily colored carnival piece Twelfth Night, and the Meiningen school came closest to perfection. And so, for the first time, Shakespeare's Twelfth Night was seen in pictures of radiant beauty; was seen for the first time also in the flow of life, the wealth of wit, the brilliance and abandon of the separate scenes harmoniously and artistically blended.[6]

---

[5] Fritz Freiherr von Ostini, Fuchs' Revolution in the Theatre (New York, 1959), p. 198.

[6] Ibid., p. 199.

The great contribution of the Meiningen Company was in their understanding and perfecting of the ensemble, rather than in concern for the individual actor's problems. Their innovations prepared the way for the development of naturalistic acting.

The artistic influence exerted upon the German stage by the company of actors in the service and under the direction of Duke of Saxe-Meiningen, at the Meiningen Theatre, was at its height between 1874 and 1890. Carefully organized by the Duke of Saxe-Meiningen, the company sought to obtain effects by minute realism, and aimed to make the scene and everything in it a reproduction of historical correctness. The company contributed to the German stage improvements in crowd effects, speech, scenery and decoration, and above all in attaining an extraordinary perfection of ensemble.

The Duke of Saxe-Meiningen thoroughly organized and managed his own famous theatre; he gathered together a really first-class troupe of players; he directed the productions, and he designed the costumes and scenery; he brought the acting more into harmony with the scenery; in fact, he had a true apprehension of scenic and acting ensemble, as well as the ability

to do everything himself. In addition to the reform of the scene, the Meiningers gained a great reputation for their reform of speech and the stage-crowd. The Duke would make elaborate drawings for various scenes in order to indicate dynamic movement on the stage. Each play was given its individual settings, costumes, and historical mode. Rehearsals were extensive and detailed, with the Duke in charge of the overall production, his wife, the former actress Ellen Franz, responsible for the interpretation of lines, and Chronegk acting as the stage-manager and disciplinarian.

The Meiningers really formed a company of speakers. Every member was an artist in this respect. The dialogue of the drama was spoken by each so that it could be heard and understood. Duke Georg handled the stage-crowds well; he appeared to have understood their composition. He was occupied with the classic crowd, which under his direction indeed formed a Greek chorus. It had a mental unity and spoke and acted as one person. The Meiningen Company travelled about Germany and England, creating a tradition.[7]

---

[7] Toby Cole and Helen Krich Chinoy, Actors on Acting (New York, 1949), p. 264.

However, the classical standard was not maintained at all. Max Reinhardt learned a great deal from the Meingers' methods of handling a crowd, but he also followed its fresh courage in breaking away from tradition.[8] Nevertheless, Reinhardt's aim was the same as that of the Meiningen company:

> To assure every dramatic action its full poetic rights by giving it an appropriate scenic frame, with the result that the performance of every drama is an individual and harmonious work of art. His means, however, were different. The assistance of other arts was sought by the Meiningers to create a 'natural' atmosphere through faithful representation of the outside world. Reinhardt on the other hand, claimed their aid, not to create 'reality,' but to assist him in endowing the inner spirit of a play with life and visible form, by transforming the outer aspects, by giving them a deeper expressiveness than that of their indifferent surface, by use of the simplest elementary forms of color and line, by revealing perspectives and distant views, as alluring as melodies. . . . [9]

---

[9] Oliver Saylor, Max Reinhardt and His Theatre (New York, 1926), p. 323.

Gordon Craig

The name of Gordon Craig signifies innovations in stage production and design. Less successful in his actual practice than in his theories and dreams, Craig nevertheless set forth ideals which liberated the theatre from the detailed imitation of surface reality prevalent at the end of the nineteenth century. Modern theatrical designers owe much to the stimulus which Craig gave to a fresh vision of theatre at the turn of the century.

Craig appeared on the stage from his youth, and from all reports he was a talented actor whose services were wanted by many managers. However, Craig was on fire to revolutionize the stage, and he turned to production and stage design. He became much admired throughout Europe for his simplified, evocative design and staging. He created designs for Brahm in Germany. Max Reinhardt adopted many of Craig's ideas.[10]

However, Huntly Carter takes a different view about Craig's influence on Reinhardt:

> We have heard a great deal about Gordon Craig's influence on the artistic development

---

[10] Toby Cole and Helen Krich Chinoy, op. cit., p. 353.

> of the German Theatre, and more especially on the work of Max Reinhardt . . . Craig contends that his influence has been considerable and not always acknowledged . . . Perhaps the charge against Reinhardt is not altogether just; for, as facts can show, there is little resemblance between his work and Craig's, and there have been acknowledgments. [11]

Sheldon Cheney in his book The Art Theatre states, "The man who has profited most by Craig's ideas, who took them up and acclaimed them to a practical world was Max Reinhardt." [12]

Reinhardt was more practical than Craig, and he modified the genius' ideas that art is reached only by long periods of contemplation and lengthy, detailed, and arduous experiment and training before the actual production. Reinhardt digested Craig's ideas and then went logically in a utilitarian method to the best compromise possible. According to George J. Nathan, "Reinhardt with Papa Craig peeping over his shoulder, brought more actual life to the stage than any other practicing director of his time. He was Gordon Craig's Paul." [13]

---

[11] Huntly Carter, op. cit., pp. 90-91.

[12] Sheldon Cheney, The Art Theatre (New York, 1925), p. 51.

[13] George J. Nathan, "The Other Incomparable Max," American Mercury (New York, 1925), p. 61.

In many of the Reinhardt productions, Craig's influence was plainly visible. The Winter's Tale may be cited as a specific example in that great stress was put on the proportions of the figures and the settings. Even Hugo von Hoffmannsthal, one of Reinhardt's closest associates acknowledged Reinhardt's debt to Gordon Craig:

> He learned much from Gordon Craig, that lonely pioneer, whose dream was to control the scene by means of changing light and to create an ever-shifting maze of color, form and motion. He learned much but only in order to create out of what he learned something newer, more powerful, better suited to the practical theatre.[14]

On the contrary, Carter states a different view on Craig's influence on Reinhardt. "There was a great deal of artistic work going on in the German Theatre before Gordon Craig arrived. Though Germans are ready to admit that there are some traces of Craig in Reinhardt's production of The Winter's Tale, there can scarcely be any in Pelleas and Melisande, seeing that this piece was produced long before Craig's visit to Germany."[15] Carter, also, contends that Brahm was the first German manager who tried to apply

---

[14] "A World Theatre Genius," Literary Digest, XLIV (February, 1922), 30-31.

[15] Carter, op. cit., p. 92.

Craig's ideas and without success. The only two sets of scenery designed by Craig himself for the German Theatre were done for Brahm. Both plays were failures; therefore, only a few details of Craig's artistic methods and still fewer of his designs are likely to have influenced the German style. Craig's influence does not appear to have gone beyond the use of curtains, experiments in lighting, and inviting the artist to aid the producer. Huntly Carter admits that this is a great deal and may be the root of a very widespread reform.[16]

Oliver Saylor has this to say about Gordon Craig:

> Gordon Craig, at the beginning of his career, was a great instigator, perhaps also an ardent teacher, but although he comes from famous stage stock, he is no "actor," if we use this term not only in its usual meaning but also literally as a man of action. Worst of all, he is no organizer, and the theatre requires organization and action just as much as inspiration and art if it is to flourish.[17]

In regard to the actor, Craig's opinion is discussed in Mordecai Gorelik's book New Theatres for Old. "Gordon Craig expressed the desire to rid the stage of actors. Finding the human actor too unreliable a medium, Craig wanted to replace him with an Uber-marionette, or puppet figure of a superior type."[18]

---

[16] Ibid., pp. 92-93.

[17] Saylor, op. cit., p. 45.

[18] Mordecai Gorelik, New Theatres for Old (New York, 1962), p. 23.

Craig's comments on acting from the controversial "Actor and the Uber-Marionette" suggest that the actor can become an original creator when he is unfettered by the words and ideas of writers, perhaps as the commedia dell' art was . . . Craig states, the theatre will continue its growth and actors will continue for some years to hinder its developmeht. They must create for themselves a new form of acting, consisting for the main part of symbolical gesture. To-day they impersonate and interpret; tomorrow they must represent and interpret; and the third day they must create. By this means style may return . .." [19]

Arthur Hopkins' article in Saylor's book, Max Reinhardt and His Theatre, states his opinion of Craig's influence on Reinhardt:

> There is at least one level head in Europe, and it sits on the shoulders of one Max Reinhardt of the Deutsches Theatre, Berlin. He has swallowed Craig, but he has digested him. He knows just how far to go with him. He knows where to dismiss Craig and revert to realism. To my mind, Reinhardt does more to assist and less to impede the author than any living producer. If he wants a great scenic effect, he is careful to place it in such a way that it is not going to kill the

---

[19] Edward Gordon Craig, "The Actor and the Ueber-Marionette," On the Art of the Theatre (Chicago, 1911), p. 54.

> lines. He makes his effect belong. They are not dragged in. They are not glaringly apparent. A little of Craig goes a long way, and Reinhardt knows how to use him.[20]

Gordon Craig developed the idea of a theatre of his own. He wanted a theatre where he could, without interference, produce plays according to his own high standard of dramatic art. However, he did not succeed in building the theatre.

Since he was not successful as a producer, he turned to writing. He wrote a number of books and published several periodicals on the theatre which show the extremely poetic nature of his ideas. Craig believed the theatre was inferior to what it might be; he wanted the world to recognize the fact that there was such a thing as an "Art of the Theatre." He felt that the theatre needed standards such as other arts had, and he objected strenuously to the dominance of theatre by the human personality of the actor. Craig advocated unity of production under one man, and he thought there should be a school, where the art of the theatre might be studied in all its aspects.

Gordon Craig was an important figure in the theatre, and he did influence Reinhardt.[21]

---

[20] Saylor, op. cit., p. 339.

[21] Toby Cole and Helen Krich Chinoy, op. cit., p. 353.

Otto Brahm

Brahm came into active cooperation with the work of the theatre at a moment when Germany was beginning to manifest a remarkable literary activity, and when the drama was once more beginning to command chief interest in Germany. His contribution to the modern theatre was indeed ensemble acting derived from the Meiningers. Soon after becoming one of the leaders of the Freie Bühne, he was appointed director of the Deutsche Theatre, where he remained ten years, till 1904, when he became director of the Lessing Theatre. At the Deutsches Theatre, he obtained full scope for applying his reforms. It was here that Reinhardt came under Brahm's influence and derived ideas of ensemble acting. Under Brahm's direction, every player was deprived of his mere stage personality and was subjected to the will of the author.[21]

He surrounded himself with a group of modern and cultured men and women, who not only could play the parts allotted to them, but knew how to subordinate themselves to the main interest of the piece, and thoroughly understood the intellectual character of that which they were interpreting. A contrast to

---

[21] Ibid., pp. 58-59.

this was the London stage, where half the modern plays were interpreted by actors who did not understand what they were doing and saying.

Carl Hagemann in his documented Regie stated, "All the activities of the theatre are group activities, and the Art of the Stage is the Art of Ensemble."[22] It was on the application of these two principles, then, that Brahm rose to fame. Brahm reached a perfection ensemble never before attained, and he gathered together a body of players who acted harmoniously together and acted into each other's hands. They considered a play as a whole and allowed no part of it to protrude. In fact, they gave it a collective individuality and quickened it with the collective Will of the Theatre, so far as the Will was expressed under the Brahm system.

There was no over-emphasis. The ensemble system was an immense advance on the one-man system in England--a system under which stars bulged over the footlights, and players were taught to fight for the center of the stage.[23]

---

[22] Ibid., pp. 60-61.

[23] Ibid., p. 61.

Brahm never hesitated to advance very small part people in important parts, and in doing so he discovered many players of talent.

So it was Otto Brahm, the founder of the Freie Buhne, who singled out Max Reinhardt as possessing extraordinary talent the first time he saw him performing at Salzburg. He trained the young amateur at the Deutsches Theatre until the time when Reinhardt felt the need of breaking away from his old master. Brahm's great contribution to the theatre is said to be his influence on ensemble psychological acting, and it is certain that he exerted this influence on Reinhardt.

Brahm gave birth to the modern type of player--educated, cultured, talented, highly restrained, understanding rather than feeling "the part," the offspring, in fact, of modern intellectual drama. Reinhardt went beyond the new tradition, and promoted Brahm's moderns to ultra-moderns by affording an opening to impulse.

Otto Brahm, before becoming a director, had been a drama critic. He was particularly well versed in dramatic literature with his sympathies and interests

leaning heavily towards the new playwrights. Brahm produced these modern plays with carefully selected and trained casts. He was insistent in regard to perfect understanding of the character the actor was to portray, and much stress was laid on bringing the author's ideas and meaning to their highest development. The company which Brahm managed and of which Reinhardt was a member was made up of a group of intelligent and cultured individuals who knew how to interpret the will of the author.

Brahm regarded the stage as life and all actors as men while Reinhardt took the Shakespearean concept that all the world is a stage and ll men players. Consequently, their working methods and results differed a great deal.[24]

To summarize the influence of these three men, the most direct influence on Reinhardt would have to be Otto Brahm because he discovered and trained the young artist in the method of ensemble acting. Craig's influence on Reinhardt deals not with the actors in the ensemble but in coordinating the scenery and lighting so that the background contributes to a unified production. And finally the most important,

---

[24] Ibid., p. 68.

from the historical view point, and yet indirect influence came from the Saxe-Meiningen concept of ensemble acting which was a great contribution to the art theatre movement. It might be said that these three men and their ideas influenced Reinhardt not as much by what they innovated as by their courage to break away from the old traditions.

CHAPTER IV

A STUDY OF MAX REINHARDT'S TREATMENT OF ENSEMBLE ACTING

> It is difficult to give an idea of the versatility of Max Reinhardt, the Wizard, as he was called in Berlin. Whatever he touched he made more precious. He had no less than seven rehearsals in a morning. He was always trying to bring out new plays, reviving old ones, training under-studies and keeping a tremendous, ever-changing repertory in two theatres intact. [1]

Eva Elise Vom Baur made this statement in an article in Current Literature.

Reinhardt's philosophy of acting was that the actor should subordinate himself to the spirit or mood of the drama and aim before all things to convey that mood to the audience. He should first assert the individuality of the play, and thereafter his own individuality. This ensemble idea also demanded that all players concerned in a production should submit to the direction of a producer.[2]

When Reinhardt began to follow the accepted principles of modern painting, that is to consider

---

[1] Eva Elise Vom Baur, "Max Reinhardt," Current Literature LXL (December, 1911), 312.

[2] Huntly Carter, The Theatre of Max Reinhardt (New York, 1914), p. 13.

light the primary source of all colors and to make use of light for his scenic effects, he laid the final stone in his edifice. Only by the synthesis and analysis of all form, through light, did he achieve that highest form of expression which was his aim: the cooperation of all factors toward a common goal. At last it was possible to give to the hard outlines of tone, speech, gesture, and motion, that flowing smoothness, that vague, dimly-defined, limitless atmosphere which was always startingly effective, inasmuch as it distracted the eye from inconsequential detail to the infinite whole. Since that invisible vibration was present in Reinhardt's conception of this world, only he could educate the actor so as to adjust him to the total picture. Of that picture, Reinhardt's performances revealed distinctly only that which should be visible at the moment. Yet the uniform rhythm must not be lost. Only he could fit into the ensemble who had experienced within himself how an apparently isolated characterization served a common end. Reinhardt's success in making this point clear to the actor, and in coaxing out of him his best qualities, even those most insignificant, was due to his ability to force the actor "to work out his own salvation."[3]

---

[3] Oliver Saylor, Max Reinhardt and His Theatre (New York, 1926), pp. 111-112.

The intellectual ensemble did not allow players to project their imagination into the characters, but compelled them to work to a rigid pattern set by the producer. Also, it opened the door on abuse by encouraging authors to sketch out their plays in soulless talk, leaving them to be filled in by acting. Efficient acting was in fact giving rise to a glut of bloodless dialogue.[4]

What others conceived in theory, Max Reinhardt gave birth to in practice. Reinhardt was aware that the haphazard education of the actor was responsible for the inanities of acting. When he became director of the Deutsches Theatre, he inaugurated a school wherein budding such actors as Eysoldt, Mossi, and Kayssler might be turned out by the score. Pupils were put through their preliminary paces, and they were taken carefully through all the departments of a player's career. A notable feature of Reinhardt's school was that it reproduced in miniature his idea of co-directorship. According to this idea there were an organizer and a number of intelligences who separately and together imposed this Will on the

---

[4] Huntly Carter, op. cit., p. 69.

student. Thus the student in his journey round the circle passed from master-mind to master-mind, gathering the finest principles of speech and action in elocution, posture, dance, gesture, and grace, till the circle of his adventures was complete. Reinhardt's policy was to discover talent. He preferred the raw to the finished material and out of the raw he wove a piece of fine tapestry which fell harmoniously within his general design.[5]

Reinhardt considered his work with the actor as the most important part of the process of production. He dedicated much more time to it than to all the rest of the work put together. From the very beginning, he reckoned with his actors, made them the basis for elaboration of his dramatic figures, permitted his artistic speculations occasionally to be influenced by their personalities--only of course, when they were individualities. Actors of little individuality, he formed and molded to fit his vision of the complete play. He studied entire roles, sentence by sentence, with the individual actors, or successfully influenced them in the course of a conversation.

---

[5] Ibid., p. 185.

The secret of the power of his ensemble lay in the rigorous training provided the actors in his school of acting and promotion. Every actor was obliged to study every phase of the actor's work. He was trained in the correct and effective utterance of speech. He was put through the Dalcroze system of rhythmic dancing for developing grace in movement and coordination. He had to study music enough to appreciate it, if not to interpret it. The actor was thoroughly trained in methods of studying drama and its background. Finally, he was put through every phase of the director's work. The result was that the actor had a good understanding of the complete work of the theatre into which he had to fit his part.[6]

Reinhardt strived for versatility and flexibility of his acting ensemble. He built up a cast three deep, each individual being ready to appear when vacancies arose. Since the actor was not trained for one particular type of part, but all parts, Reinhardt had no trouble in filling vacancies. This practice was an outgrowth of his own early methods of study when he was an actor under Brahm at the "Deutsches."

---

[6] Ibid., pp. 184-185.

Evidences of the versatility and flexibility of his ensemble acting were found in many instances. In the two months that Reinhardt was in New York, the amazing versatility of his players was clearly demonstrated.[7] In the production of Love and Intrigue and in The Living Corpse, flexibility was demonstrated. In the first play Helen Thimig was cast for the Peasant Luise, and Lili Darvas for the aristocratic Lady Milford. In the second production they were cast again for the contrasting roles of Lisa and Masha, but each in the opposite type of part, and each played both parts equally well. Another instance of the flexibility of Reinhardt's ensemble was that of Moissi playing the leading role in Everyman one week and of Oberon in A Midsummer Night's Dream the next week during the first New York season. This type of training not only gave the actor flexibility and versatility, but it gave the performance freshness and spontaneity.[8]

Until Reinhardt left Germany in 1921, his acting ensemble as he built it up from the first days of his directorship remained practically intact. He gave

---

[7] Gilbert Gabriel, "Reinhardt in His Den," Theatre Arts Monthly, XII (April, 1928), 256.

[8] Ibid., pp. 256-262.

them every consideration, and he paid them well. Among his ensemble were Alexander Moissi, Emil Jannings, Rudolph Schildkraut, Ernst Lubitsch, Albert Bassermann, Max Pallenberg, Paul Wegner, the three Teimigs, Else Heims, Lili Darvas, Gertrud Eysoldt, Werner Kraus, and later ones, Lady Diana Manners and Rosamond Pinchot, who played the leading parts in the American production of The Miracle. Nora Gregor, who played with Douglas Fairbanks, Junior, in The Man in Possession, and Marlene Dietrich of movie fame were his pupils. Many of these actors were in the American moving pictures.

In speaking of the quality of German acting, Glenn Hughes said, "The acting of Emil Jannings, Werner Kraus, and Conrad Veidt (all of the Reinhardt family) easily overshadowed the work of any other group of actors in the world." [9]

Reinhardt trained every actor individually. If one of them was unable to follow Reinhardt's path and chose his own, the master did not object and was satisfied at finding him his proper place in the ensemble. Sometimes he altered the entire work to

---

[9] Glenn Hughes, The Story of the Theatre (New York, 1928), p. 304.

conform with the actor's work. In such cases, he often stimulated the actor, within his individual mode, to achievements of which the latter had never dreamed. He led everyone to disclose his innermost nature. Reinhardt forced everyone to give his very best. In the end, everyone, even the least, gave more than he himself believed he possessed.[10]

Reinhardt's duty toward the actors consisted in obtaining adequate freedom of action for them. Nearly all the great actors of Germany belonged to his repertory theatres; most of them had been discovered and trained by him. He supported Alexander Moissi for years against the violent onslaughts of the Berlin critics, who objected to his insufferable Italian accent and to his conspicuous lack of talent, until he became the greatest actor of the German stage.

It is worth noting that actors who came to Reinhardt without name often won a reputation in a short time, which they again lost as soon as they left Reinhardt. For a while what they had learned retained its influence, but as soon as they fell into

---

[10] Huntly Carter, op. cit., p. 106.

the hands of other regisseurs, or worked without a regisseur, a great part of their power and likewise of their fame, was lost.[11]

Reinhardt was unable to realize fully his dramatic conceptions within the compass of his own body; therefore, he did so through the bodies of others..His suggestive influence on the actor was great because the actor felt that someone was listening to him who was not only a teacher or doctor who could help him, but that someone was sitting there below who would always be as carried away as the naive public when the actor succeeded.

Catharine E. Sibley drew from her own experience in the Reinhardt acting ensemble at the Josefstadt and states:

> . . . it was through the inspiration of the actor that the Reinhardt theatre flowered. A performer with whom I played on the Viennese stage in "Tovarisch" confessed that 'if any other director had had the temerity to show me how the role should be played, I would have felt insulted. But I am always struck forcibly with the fact that I am witnessing the greatest actor in the world. When Reinhardt plays it, he plays it with such compelling rightness, that for the moment one is unable to imagine how it could possible be played otherwise.'
>
> The world knew Reinhardt as the great director, but it was Reinhardt the actor who created the direction in the first place. The

---

[11] Ibid., p. 106.

> roles Reinhardt portrayed in his younger years were all character parts that came on the stage for a few minutes and then were off forever. Consequently, he must create a complete impression, a complete character and a successful one, for he would have no second chance to retrieve what he might have missed. It was this early training, this early necessity to step on the stage and, so to speak, strike twelve and then vanish, that gave Reinhardt the perspective and the craft in later years to show another actor what was wanted in a role in exact keynote of voice and minutest detail of gesture. [12]

Reinhardt possessed the happy facility of being able to recognize hidden talent. He discovered and developed many prominent actors of this century. The idea has been advanced that the reason some of these people did not succeed when they left his company was because he was capable of capitalizing on their particular talents and also was able to know how to conceal their defects.[13]

Max Reinhardt's working method, if it can be put briefly, might be expressed thus: he studied diligently the selected drama, decided on its dominant flavor, and then intensified it by every possible means. Reinhardt believed that the play lived in the emotional response of the audience, not in its cast of

---

[12] Catharine E. Gibley, "Memories of A Genius," California Monthly CXIII (August, 1944) p. 40.

[13] Huntly Carter, op. cit., p. 106.

actors, and in order to bring about that response he prepared a Regie Buch, a tremendous prompt book.

This Regie Buch was a working script which Reinhardt prepared for every drama he produced. It contained his ideas in detail how the drama should be presented. Sometimes six months, a year, or even a longer period of time was spent by Reinhardt in preparing his prompt book, for everything had to be worked out:

> The notes cover every phase, every nuance, every detail of the production--the gesture of the actor, the tone of voice, the movement; the rhythm, and accent of the play, the mass arrangement of the setting, all the stage business. [14]

Reinhardt went about for years with a finished or almost finished outline for a production in his mind. On occasion--after conferences with the painter, the dramatic instructor, the musical adviser--he delayed the production again and again. His book of stage directions was about the most thorough example of its kind in existence. It represented a complete, detailed paraphrase of the play in the stage manager's

---

[14] Morton Eustis, "The Director Takes Command," Theatre Arts Monthly XX (March, 1936), 214.

language. Everything was taken into consideration, from the most important feature to the least: period

> The atmosphere of every scene, of every conversation in that scene, of every sentence in the conversation. Expression, intonation, every position of the actor, every emotion, the indication of every interval, the effect on the other actors--all these details are mapped out in clear, concise words. At the beginning of each scene, there is a minute description of all the decorations, generally accompanied by drawings, together with a sketch of the stage with full explanations; there is an accurate descritpion of the costume for every new actor, all the crossings within a scene are not only mentioned, but also sketched; the lighting and all the changes in the illumination are described; there are notes on the significance, expression, length, and volume of the music; notes on the different noises; and notes on the way in which the change of scenes is to proceed. [15]

This book contained all these elements which have been listed.

After Reinhardt finished this book, he began the conferences with the scenic artist, the dramatic instructor, the chief technician, and eventually with the composer. Reinhardt's manner of dealing with his designer differed greatly according to the personality of that artist, according to the play, and according to his own relation to it. Sometimes Reinhardt gave the play to the painter and expected him to give his

---

[15] Oliver Saylor, op. cit., p. 118.

own ideas in regard to the scenery. Then again, Reinhardt explained a rough draft of his plan, or he gave the painter a project completely outlined by himself.

Next, the costumes had to be adapted to the character of the play. They had to be harmonious in their own colors. Since the costumes and decorations had to be made, Reinhardt found out that the details of the decorations were best made at "home" and therefore provided his theatre with large shops, which turned out excellent work.[16] This circumstance of his shops alone gave Reinhardt an opportunity to experiment freely.

Reinhardt's preparation for the different aspects of the production made it possible for him to have the kind of environment he needed for his ensemble acting.

The rehearsals, of course, had started long before--as a rule simultaneously with the execution of the decorations. Reinhardt always considered his work with the actor as the most important part of the process of production. He dedicate much more time to it than to all the rest of the work put together.[17]

---

[16] Ibid., p. 119.

[17] Ibid., p. 120.

Reinhardt realized that one of the most important and difficult problems that he must face was the casting of the play. However, he had an unusual talent for casting, and under his direction many actors did outstanding work, which they never repeated under other directors. The number of truly significant actors associated with him at various times testified to his histrionic perspicuity. In an article, Actors on Acting, Julius Bab called him a "born actor" and said that his qualities as a director stemmed from the fact that "he was an actor who could transcend his own physical being to communicate the play of his imagination to others."[18]

In the German theatre it was the custom to retain a fairly permanent company of actors. Reinhardt followed the German tradition, but he reinforced his group by the school which he established at the Deutsches Theatre soon after he assumed control. Saylor describes his actors thus:

> The group of artists around Reinhardt is a growing unit of free, independent individuals. Common work binds them from production to production. As a unit, however, they have no organization. Besides there is a continuous development and transformation.[19]

---

[18] Toby Cole, Actors on Acting (New York, 1949), pp. 273-274.

[19] Saylor, op. cit., p. 109.

In an interview granted to Morton Eustis of Theatre Arts Monthly, Reinhardt expressed the following:

> In casting it is infinitely more important to get a powerful personality to fill a role rather than an actor, who, photographically, seems perfectly suited to the part.[20]

Reinhardt was famous for unearthing new and unknown talent. He will always be remembered for his unexampled loyalty to the unknown actor. From first to last he helped those who stood looking in at the window of the theatre for chances which no one would offer them.[21]

Reinhardt made every actor feel that a small part was just as essential to the play and just as worthy an object of study as a large one, and that it afforded him just as fine an opportunity for good acting and good team work. As one way of encouraging this feeling Reinhardt assigned experienced players to small parts every now and then when they were not otherwise engaged. He impressed upon them the dignity of doing a small thing well and the importance of subordinating the individual to the ensemble effect.

---

[20] Morton Eustis, op. cit., p. 215.

[21] Huntly Carter, op. cit., p. 51.

The names of Reinhardt's actors were impressive ones. During his long years of production he gathered around himself a most cosmopolitan and capable company. The absence of the star system enabled him to use famous and outstanding actors and actresses in minor parts as well as in leads.

> All Reinhardt asked was that every one working with him be himself and keep on developing his artistic faculties, in order that he might become richer, more expressive of what was beautiful in him and more and more qualified for a stage which lives. [22]

After all the initial meetings with the various collaborators had taken place and casting had been completed, Reinhardt began his first rehearsals. He assumed the all-important role, not only as a member of the group but as its leader. Reinhardt's principle of the ensemble was, "no stars, no tricks, no incompetence, all the players guided by a central figure, the director, all the acting subordinated to a central idea, the author's." [23]

Reinhardt persuaded the actor of his own free will to surrender to the ensemble: this power of suggestion sprang from the conciseness with which every figure stood before his eyes as an effective part of the total

---

[22] Oliver Saylor, op. cit., p. 108.

[23] Huntly Carter, op. cit., p. 69.

picture which he worked out with untiring zeal. These children of his imagination, Reinhardt laid before his actor during the first rehearsal.

> With the patience and keen senses of an Indian, he sneaked around the actor, and lured him into the mask of the figure he represented. Nourished thus through the channels of all his senses with the food prepared for him, the actor gradually grew into his task; and, released in his mind from having to give conscious support to the whole, he was able, by the inspired will of his leader, to reach the uppermost range of his possibilities in materializing the role given to him. Knowing that his capital would yield him generous returns, every actor submitted unconditionally to Reinhardt, with the result that the least important actor of his ensemble was superior in a sense to the best who came from a different school. [24]

At Rehearsals, Reinhardt was a clown at a given moment: in the next a loving sweetheart; in the third, a warrior among a hundred others. Even during the last twenty-four hours between the dress rehearsal and the first performance, he conferred, experimented, changed, eliminated certain parts which did not seem important or which the actor wasn't able to master completely. For him rehearsal did not cease until the curtain rose.[25]

In regard to Reinhardt's rehearsals, Morton Eustis stated:

---

[24] Oliver Saylor, op. cit., p. 112.

[25] Huntly Carter, op. cit., p. 122.

> Watching Reinhardt rehearse for the first time, especially during the early days of rehearsals, was apt to suggest that he treated his actors almost as if they were puppets, controlling every movement and gesture, the slightest change in intonation, impressing the stamp of his personality on them collectively and individually until they were molded into his own conception of the roles. [26]

When necessary Reinhardt was known to go over an entire role, sentence by sentence, with an actor outside of rehearsal time, for it was evident that he enjoyed rehearsing his actors. He responded to their emotions as readily as any naive member of the audience did during actual performances. Ashley Dukes commented, "His rehearsals are prodigiously amusing as well as exceedingly thorough." [27]

Slowly and definitely Reinhardt's casts followed his every suggestion at rehearsal, for they were unable to resist the almost hypnotic spell their director exercised. At every rehearsal Reinhardt made changes and tried different effects. Oliver Saylor states, "On the day of the first performance, Reinhardt cuts, changes, abandons, so that an atmosphere of most intense energy remains and increases up to the final hour before the curtain rises." [28]

---

[26] Morton Eustis, op. cit., pp. 211-217.

[27] Ashley Dukes, "Salzburg in 1926," Theatre Arts Monthly, X (November, 1927), 745-754.

Reinhardt, during rehearsal period, played every role. He was on the stage showing one actor how he should play a part, speaking the lines with a remarkably resonant and flexible voice, using his hands, his extraordinarily pliable body, every tool at an actor's command, to put across his idea; next he was in the orchestra, chanting with the singers, calling out the actor's speeches in unison with them, pointing up the sound with highly expressive gestures. He seemed to be everywhere at the same time. He told the actor everything. Reinhardt stopped the scene, re-enacted it, played every role himself, set the movement and the pace. Once more the scene was played. Reinhardt was on the stage; he stood beside the actor. He laughed with him, exaggerated the tone, over-emphasized the gestures, seemed almost to force the actor by sheer hypnotic power to achieve the desired pitch and intensity of inflection and movement. The scene was played over again. Again Reinhardt watched, and this time he was pleased.

After two weeks of rehearsals, Reinhardt's 'performance' was no longer the dominant one. He sat quietly in the gloom of the auditorium and watched the scene unfold. Once the scene or act was concluded,

however, Reinhardt seated his actors in a semi-circle on the stage and proceeded to go through the entire scene, telling each actor just where an inflection, a gesture, a movement was wrong, where it was right; what must be done, and how to do it, the next time.

Reinhardt had the happiest way of changing his method with one and the same actor during the study of the same role. Under conditions which forced him to do as Reinhardt wished, the director drove the actor to desperation, made him discouraged, until he brought him into the direction he wanted him to go. Then with a casual, enthusiastic word of praise, he would set the actor on his feet again in such a way that he went into the work with stronger intensity than before.

Reinhardt did not insist always on his own will, but often brought out original ideas on the part of the actor, born of the letter's individuality, which he then, with renunciation, permitted to supersed his own earlier wish.[29] He did not prepare for the actor a warm or a cold shower-bath or massage, but each of his rehearsals was like a steam-bath on which the actor

---

[29] Huntly Carter, op. cit., p. 106.

went from one to the other, complained about his treatment, but at the end left the bath with the feeling that he had become a new man.

When Reinhardt began rehearsal, he gave to the entire group a picture of the play. He pretended not to notice the state of lethargy in which they usually found themselves and gave them time to get into the spirit of the play. When the actual rehearsal began, he indulged the actors, but, as Gertrud Eysoldt said:

> The minute a sound in the voice betrays our spirit he holds to it tenaciously and will not let it go. He tortures us, drives us forward, resolves every doubt. Once we are under way all our repressions melt away. A rhythm of intensity and exhaustions swings us into the circle. Reinhardt grasps and holds it. We give ourselves up to the play. We sense our partner, his face, his eyes, his hands, his figure, his wooing, his hostility, his hopes, and his strife. Reinhardt brings voices into contact, creates distances. He keeps up our enthusiasm, forces us back into the beat of rhythm. On leaving the scene we drop exhausted into chairs in the background, trying to quiet the tumult within us, so that we will not waste it on meaningless objects outside the play in which we live. [30]

Gertrud Eysoldt was one of his actresses, and she gave in this description a picture of Reinhardt's powerful energy inciting the energy of the actors.

---

30 Gertrud Eysoldt, "How Reinhardt Works With His Actors," Theatre Arts Monthly, V (October, 1925), 318.

This description might seem to suggest that he forced his will upon his actors. On the contrary, he insisted on original ideas born of the actor's individuality. He sometimes changed his methods with a single actor during the study of a single part. It was his immense suggestive power that made his success. He wanted actors to be themselves and to develop their artistic faculties; he suggested to them means and ways. Reinhardt had the ability to stir the actor to work out his own salvation, but always with a view to cooperating with the entire group.[31]

Reinhardt was kind and considerate, especially to the new and inexperienced actors, but he never left a rehearsal until he saw that each one had taken at least one step in advance. He expected hard work and thoroughness from them and unselfish devotion to the presentation of the drama as a whole.

Both the actors and their acting were the outcome of thoroughness and reverence for the theatre. They existed for the play; they were never exploited as "stars," each was a part of the whole, and each was rehearsed as a part of the whole.[32]

---

[31] Huntly Carter, op. cit., p. 106.

[32] Ibid., p. 185.

This matter of the willingness of the actor to subordinate himself and mold himself into the ensemble was, needless to say, one of the most important of all the elements involved in Reinhardt's successful productions.

Some of his productions that will be discussed were considered milestones in his career.

> The first milestone was the production of Gorky's The Lower Depths, a realistic drama. Reinhardt's production gained its unusual quality chiefly from the casting. The parts were filled in every case by distinguished actors, two-thirds of whom had been recently discovered by him. The interplay was remarkable, and there was a harmonious rhythm behind the whole which gave to the separate scenes their extraordinary tempo. [33]

A Midsummer Night's Dream was Reinhardt's first big Shakespearean success. Huntly Carter records:

> It has been played over five hundred times and is never long out of the bill. This is probably the theatre's record, and indeed, too long a life for any production. The playing it in repertory, and the constant changes of cast (at this performance only one of the original actors appeared), have kept it as fresh as may be, and the meaning and spirit of the production survive well enough; moreover, to the connoisseur in these things there is a certain charm in the easy, well-worn way it all goes. [34]

---

[33] Oliver Saylor, op. cit., pp. 22-23.

[34] Huntly Carter, op. cit., p. 186.

The secret of Reinhardt's success in producing Shakespearean comedies was due to the fact that he enjoyed himself. He certainly did so when staging A Midsummer Night's Dream. He called in the aid of others who were also under the spell of its childlike charm. And so by means of appropriate music, acting, and decoration, this delightful fantasy took Berlin by storm.[35]

The actor's insight and technique of execution, the artist's intuition and quick absorption of form, color, and light, and the irrepressible spirit of play--all contributed to Max Reinhardt's success with the new version of A Midsummer Night's Dream which broke upon the delighted theatre-goers of Berlin in the early weeks of 1905.

Oliver Saylor states the following about Reinhardt's production of A Midsummer Night's Dream: "It made Reinhardt famous; it inaugurated a new period in German literature."[36]

Reinhardt's third milestone was Sophocles' Oedipus Rex. Here again was a new world, a new manner of direction which made so prodigious an impression

---

[35] Ibid., pp. 47-48.

[36] Oliver Saylor, op. cit., p. 8.

that this play was presented not only in Germany but also in Scandinavia, Holland, Poland, and Russia.[37]

The acting in Oedipus Rex was contemporary. There was no attempt to go back to tradition, but everything was brought up to date.

> Rhythm, which is one of the chief components of Greek verse, was there. In more than one instance the words were bound rhythmically together, and fell pleasantly on the sensitive ear. . . . The handling of the crowd revealed Max Reinhardt's methods at their best. It was an up-to-date crowd composed of individual speakers, a human crowd formed of living elements.[38]

In regard to these three productions, Oliver Saylor makes these comments:

> It is impossible to make any hard and fast statement about a Reinhardt genre based on these three productions of wholly dissimilar plays, of different epochs and civilizations. It consists perhaps in his remarkable ability to give to each of these presentations its peculiar rhythm and by means of this rhythm to mold each one into a living breathing organism--a thing made possible, of course, by the author, but which only a director of genius could transfer to the stage with such unimpaired vigor.[39]

Reinhardt had many other productions, and each in its own way added lustre to his unique reputation

---

[37] Ibid., p. 23.

[38] Huntly Carter, op. cit., p. 219.

[39] Oliver Saylor, op. cit., pp. 23-24.

as master of massed players in the theatre.] Concerning Reinhardt's ability, Oliver Saylor makes the following statement:

> It is generally conceded that no man in our own or memorable time has had so sure an instinct or so magnetic an influence for releasing even the most inexperienced actors from self-conscious inhibitions and for molding them, no matter how widely they may be separated on stage or in auditorium, into a throbbing, thrilling, impassioned, and plastic unity.[40]

Even more [understanding of the secret of Reinhardt's directorial genius were the actors, whose performances were the outward expression of Reinhardt's artistry.] Gertrud Eysoldt, an actress of Reinhardt's for many years, writes:

> There is a deep meaning in childish play. The puzzle column of illustrated papers shows pictures with the words: 'Where is the hunter?' or 'Where is the hare?' I should like to draw a picture like this of the actors of the Deutsches Theatre, and write under it: 'Where is Reinhardt?' He is there, make no mistake! In ethereal form, between the figures on the stage, hidden in the trunk of a tree, or in a cloud, in the outlines of Moissi, a Wegener, a Hoflich. He peeps out of Schilkraut's sleeve, and you see his profile in the helpless droop of the head of Pallenberg. He is there in the midst of them. They are visible and you see him through their being. They materialize him. Thus he leads a mysterious existence . . . he becomes the great magician who plays treasures into our hands.

---

40 Oliver Saylor, "The Play of the Week," Saturday Review, IV (February, 1928), 567-568.

> With all his senses vibrating with conscious life, he frees the senses of the actor. Full of emotion, he passes on to us light, form, color, and sound, and rejoices at the echo he finds in us. It is his joy to recreate in us his own self, multiform, protean. He lives in our blood, and deep is the contrast between him and his actor.[41]

The poet-critic, von Hofmannstahl, attempts to analyze the secret of those 'vibrations' which every artist sensed when creating and playing for Reinhardt:

> His great influence upon the development of the European stage, and the inspiration he has been, to playwrights and actors alike, give interest to an inquiry into the hidden principles that direct his work, and lead to an understanding of that central energy whose vibrations have been felt far beyond the shores of Europe. . . . This central energy is, in truth, the soul of a highly gifted actor, who, unable to realize fully his dramatic conceptions within the compass of his own body, does so through the bodies of others. This type of genius closely resembles that other peculiarly compounded one, the dramatic poet, who also is something of an actor.[42]

In analyzing Reinhardt's uncanny ability of imagination to translate dramatic values into intense dramatic effect, von Hofmannstahl points out that he was spendthrift, that he was influenced only by a principle:

> . . . to get the most out of a play, the poet must give elbow-room to the producer, the

---

[41] Ibid., pp. 101-103.

[42] Ibid., pp. 68-69.

> producer to the actor, and the actor to the audience; for only in the mind of the audience does the circle of effects find its consummation. [43]

From the foregoing one can see the consummation of the Reinhardt directorial concept which began in the isolation of a single man's imagination, as first substantiated by research and then enlivened by the spirit of play, enlarged through the sympathetic collaboration of fellow artists in the realm of design, lighting, music, and dance, and brought into dynamic life through the artistry of the actors. Through his imagination in the overall production, Reinhardt was able to accomplish the highest level of ensemble acting.

---

[43] Ibid., pp. 73-74.

CHAPTER V

REINHARDT'S INFLUENCE ON ENSEMBLE ACTING

There is no doubt that Max Reinhardt developed the method of ensemble acting to a fine art. To enhance the ensemble, he was one of the first directors to realize the importance of lighting and to use this lighting to emphasize or de-emphasize certain parts of stage, scenery, or even the actors themselves. To increase the effectiveness of a single impression of the ensemble, Reinhardt drew sketches of both the scenery and the costumes in his Regie Buch so that no detail would be uncoordinated.

Huntly Carter certainly summerized this "single effect" contribution when he stated:

> Reinhardt popularized a whole new approach to the theatre. When Appia was unknown and Craig was being attacked as an impractical dreamer, Reinhardt was presenting production after production exemplifying their principle of the harmonious emotional union of play writing, acting, scenery, costume, music and dance, and was proving that stylization could be commercially successful. [1]

---

[1] Huntly Carter, The Theatre of Max Reinhardt (New York, 1914), p. 90.

Reinhardt's greatest contribution to ensemble acting was his interest in and direction of the actors in each specific role. He took great care to work with each actor, famous or obscure, so that the actor could understand exactly how every sentence, word, or gesture should be executed. This great care in explaining each part resulted in a unified production with no star and no rough or loose ends.

Yet even though he had every detail of the play organized to an infinite degree, he had the capacity and flexibility to allow for changes when an actor's personality created a problem in acting out a certain role. Most of his students and later his actors agreed that, although he insisted upon certain procedures, he made every person feel that he had accomplished something new during each rehearsal.

Finally, Reinhardt had the foresight or insight to realize that an actor should know how to perform in more than one role in a single play. Even the most famous actors learned to accept and portray the small roles. This interchange created a spirit of unity and cast morale which was hard to explain.

Not only was Reinhardt the master of ensemble acting, he was also a master of the mechanical aspects

of a production. As he developed and refined this acting method, he also improved the effects of the previously mentioned mechanics--music, lighting, scenery, and costumes--to complement the ensemble acting. Thus in a cyclical fashion, the ensemble acting and mechanical aspects of the play enhance each other.

The ideas of Max Reinhardt have had a marked influence upon themethods of play representation and interpretation all over the country. There was no denying that the Reinhardt's influence was the most important and the most valuable one from the general theatrical point of view.[2]

The author of Continental Stagecraft, Kenneth MacGowan, calls Max Reinhardt "the greatest man of the theatre in this century."[3] MacGowan goes on to say that it was most evident that Reinhardt in his prodigious labors in the theatre exerted a vital influence which was of great proportion and that made itself felt through his disciples and pupils.

> He was the inspiration and instructor of many American actors, designers and producers, who sought him out in his own country.[4]

---

[2] Oliver Saylor, Max Reinhardt and His Theatre (New York, 1926), pp. 92-93.

[3] Kenneth MacGowan, "Max Reinhardt," Theatre Arts Monthly, LV (January, 1944), 107.

[4] Ibid., p. 107.

In an interview published in Theatre Arts, Mady Christians, a famous and successful actress paid tribute to her former teacher by ascribing the acclaim she won playing the title role in I Remember Mama to her training under Max Reinhardt.

> There we had a great director, a great genius. We played so many parts--I played seven different roles in a single year. And in each Reinhardt gave us something we could hardly have gained anywhere else. He gave us all part of his great understanding. And his sincerity was contagious. Acting was from the heart--never mechanically. This was fine preparation for the American theatre.[5]

Reinhardt's relentless enthusiasm, energy, and achievements in his theatrical labors prompted Oliver Saylor to write:

> I can only say with the rest of the world--that Reinhardt has without question the greatest theatrical mentality of all time from the practical working point of view. For no one has produced theatrical volume and theatrical quantity in a more marvelous way than he, none has taken the earlier forms and made them over into terms suitable to our times, and made a new language out of them for the days in which we live.[6]

Reinhardt was not only a great artist, but a very practical man of the theatre. To Reinhardt art was the reason for his existence and the existence of the theatre and almost of the world. His spirit could not

---

[5] Mady Christians, "Max Reinhardt," Theatre Arts Monthly, LVI (April, 1945), 229.

[6] Oliver Saylor, op. cit., p. 96.

taught.

Reinhardt was a great influence on the many and varied groups who actually engaged in his productions. Such were London managers, leading actors and actresses, and the hundred of extra people engaged in the crowd scenes. Then there was the wider stimulus to the cultural movement in the big music-halls--the Palace, Palladium, Hippodrome, Coliseum, Alhambra, and Empire. Here it was shown in the improvement in scenery and stage effects. Besides this, the entertainments grew more and more refined in tone; the old chaotic scenes were replaced by others which had unity of scheme and decoration.[8]

The influence that Reinhardt had on the actor is stated by Morton Eustis in Theatre Arts:

> Many actors who played in Reinhardt's companies have, since the advent of Nazism, found in America a new home and a renewed opportunity, among them Bassermann, Homolka, Sokoloff and Elizabeth Bergner are best known to American screen and theatre audiences. What Reinhardt did for the actors of his

---

[7] Ludwig Lewisohn, "Max Reinhardt," Nation, CXVIII (February, 1924), 190.

[8] Sheldon Cheney, The Art Theatre (New York, 1917), p. 66.

> reputation only the actors know in full. But those who worked with him, young and old, comedians and tragedians, were generous of their appreciation. Many of them could play well only under his direction but those were the lesser artists and not the ones he loved most. The others went out into the theatre of the world. [9]

In an article in the Saturday Review, Oliver Saylor makes the following statement:

> Here is a man, who, in a career of more than a quarter century as regisseur of Central European stages, has done more than any single living artist for the cause of dramatic literature in the theatre, an artist who has stamped his personality and his quickening vision on six stages in Berlin, two in Vienna, and on playhouses in Salzburg, Munich, Dresden, Budapest, Copenhagen, Stockholm, and London. [10]

In regard to Reinhardt's influence on the theatre, Thomas Dickinson states:

> Reinhardt has had his full quota of the qualities of exhibitionism and sensationalism. He has stood at the cross-roads of the world and sold his wares, gathered from the museums, the studios, the ateliers of the East and West, to the passing multitudes. As certainly as his theatre has been great in lusty vigor and technical command it has been lacking in that spiritual integrity without which no art reaches its highest levels. When all this has been said, we fail to do justice to Reinhardt's highest contributions to the Theatre. In freeing the theatre from the constraints of literature, he brought it to a point at which all the arts

---

[9] Morton Eustis, "Max Reinhardt," Theatre Arts, XXVIII (January, 1944), 51.

[10] Oliver Saylor, "The Play of the Week," Saturday Review, IV (February, 1928), 484.

> could work together freely and he has done this while paying reverent tribute to the essential role of the poet-composer, for he has been as catholic in repertory as he has been skillful in execution. It is a question whether Reinhardt is the first exponent of a new code of theatrical production or the last of the old. [11]

Gilbert Gabriel summarizes beautifully the success of Reinhardt's ensemble acting in his article, "Reinhardt in His Den."

> Reinhardt's main endeavor was to have a perfect ensemble of which he was the leader, not the dictator. He was known all over the world for his excellent acting ensemble. He was a master of ensemble; the art theatres have profited by his use of ensemble. Reinhardt built up his ensemble on the foundation established by Brahm and the Duke of Meiningen. The success of it was found in Reinhardt's own personality. His sympathy for the inexperienced actor in his earliest days of directing, his capacity for detecting instantly desirable acting qualities in the individual, and his infinite patience in training earnest aspirants to the stage made it possible to build around himself an unusual number of capable artists. No other director had so magnetic an influence for releasing the most inexperienced actor from self-conciousness and inhibitions; for keeping trained actors over such long periods of time; and for molding throbbing, impassioned masses, no matter how much stage or auditorium space separated them, into a plastic unity. [12]

---

[11] Thomas H. Dickinson, The Theatre In a Changing Europe (New York, 1917)

[12] Gilbert Gabriel, "Reinhardt in His Den," Theatre Arts Monthly, XII (April, 1928), 256-262.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Books

Carter, Huntly, The New Spirit in the European Theatre, New York, George H. Doran Company, 1925.

Carter, Huntly, The Theatre of Max Reinhardt, New York, Mitchell Kennerly, 1914.

Cheney, Sheldon, The Art Theatre, New York, Alfred A. Knopf, 1917.

Cheney, Sheldon, The Theatre--Three Thousand Years of Drama, Acting, and Stagecraft, New York, Longmans Green and Company, 1929.

Cole, Toby, Actors on Acting, New York, Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1949.

Craig, Gordon, On The Art of Theatre, Boston, Houghton Mifflen, Co., 1911.

Craig, Edward Gordon, Scene, London, H. Milford, Oxford University Press, 1923.

Craig, Edward Gordon, The Theatre Advancing, Boston, Little, Brown and Company, 1919.

Craig, Edward Gordon, Towards a New Theatre, London, J.M. Dent & Sons, 1913.

Danton, George, H., Ten Years After, New York, Houghton Mifflin Company, 1928.

Dickinson, Thomas H., The Theatre of a Changing Europe, New York, B.W. Huebsch, 1917.

Dolman, John Jr., Art of Acting, New York, Harper and Brothers, 1949.

Dolman, John Jr., The Art of Play Production, New York, Harper and Brothers, 1928.

Dukes, Ashley, The Modern Theatre, Oxford Press, 1928.

Flanagan, Hallie, Shifting Scenes, New York, Coward McCann, Inc., 1928.

Gorelik, Mordecai, New Theatres for Old, Samuel French, 1952.

Grube, Max, The Story of the Meiningen, University of Miami Press, 1954.

Hamilton, Clayton, The Theory of the Theatre, New York, Henry Holt and Company, 1910.

Hughes, Glenn, The Story of the Theatre, New York, Samuel French, 1928.

Jourdain, Eleanor F., The Drama in Europe in Theory and Practice, New York, Henry Holt and Company, 1924.

Macgowan, Kenneth, Continental Stagecraft, New York, Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1922.

Macgowan, Kenneth, Footlights Across America, Towards a National Theatre, New York, Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1929.

Macgowan, Kenneth, The Theatre of Tomorrow, New York, Boni Liveright, 1921.

Moderwell, Hiram K., The Theatre of Today, New York, Dodd, Mead and Company, 1923.

Nicoll, Allardyce, The Development of the Theatre, New York, Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1927.

Ostini, Fritz, Fuchs' Revolution in the Theatre, New York, Henry Holt and Company, 1959.

Robertson, John G., The History of German Literature, New York, G.P. Putnam's Sons, Ltd., 1930.

Saylor, Oliver M., Max Reinhardt and His Theatre, New York, Brentano's, 1926.

Sellman, S., Stage Scenery and Lighting, New York, F.A. Crofts and Company, 1939.

Simonson, Lee, The Scene Is Set, New York, Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1932.

Simonson, Lee, The Theatre of Robert Edmond Jones, New York, Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1958.

Stevens, Thomas Wood, The Theatre From Athens to Broadway, New York, Appleton and Company, 1932.

Witkowski, Georg, German Drama of the Nineteenth Century, Translated by L.E. Horning, New York, Henry Holt and Company, 1909.

Young, Stark, Theatre Practice, New York, C. Scribner's Sons, 1926.

Articles

"A World Genius," Literary Digest, XLIV (February, 1922), 30-31.

Baur, Eva Elise Vom, "Max Reinhardt," Current Literature, LXI (December, 1911), 913.

Bonner, Eugene, "Festival Performances At Salzburg," Outlook, CL (September, 1928), 868.

Braydon, C., "The Theatre Transformed," Architectual Record, LV (April, 1924), 388-397.

"Chamber Drama in Germany," Current Literature, XXXXVI (March, 1909), 313-314.

Clark, Barrett H., "New Trends in the Theatre," Forum, LXII (November, 1924), 665-676.

Clark, Barrett H., "Young Germany and the Theatre," Drama, XV (January, 1924), 25-26.

"Democratizing German Theatres," Literary Digest, LXII (September, 1919), 33-34.

"Dominating Figure in the New Theatre of Germany," Current Opinion, LXVIII (January, 1921), 56.

Dukes, Ashley, "Salzburg in 1926," Theatre Arts Monthly, X (December, 1927), 745-754.

Eloesser, Arthur, "The German Theatre of Today," Nation, CXV (June, 1922), 700-701.

Eysoldt, Gertrud, "Max Reinhardt Works with His Actors," Theatre Arts Monthly, V (October, 1921), 315-319.

Gabriel, Gilbert, "Reinhardt in His Den," Theatre Arts Monthly, XII (April, 1928), 256-262.

"German Theatre of Today," [illegible], LI (May, 1920), 663.

"Germany's Home Brew Drama," Literary Digest, LVI (February, 1923), 30.

Hewitt, Barnard, "Max Reinhardt," High School Thespian, XIII (April, 1944), 40.

"Internationalism in the German Theatre Today," Literary Digest, LII (January, 1916), 118-119.

"In the German Theatre," Living Age, CCCX (July, 1921), 120-124.

Jennings, John H., "Winthrop Ames' Notes For The Perfect Theatre," Educational Theatre Journal, XII (March, 1960), 9-15.

Kennedy, John B., "Max Reinhardt," Collier's, LXXX (January, 1928), 24.

Krutch, Joseph W., "Reinhardt," Nation, CXXV (December, 1927), 666.

Krutch, Joseph W., "Reinhardt's Redemption," Nation, CXXVII (February, 1928), 640-641.

Lewisohn, Ludwig, "Max Reinhardt," Nation, CXI (October, 1920), 405.

Macgowan, Kenneth, "Max Reinhardt," Theatre Arts Monthly, XV (January, 1944), 107.

"Max Reinhardt Hypnotizing the World," Current Literature, LII (March 1912), 337-338.

Nathan, George Jean, "The Other Incomparable Max," American Mercury, XIII (January, 1928), 117-118.

"A Pictorial History of Reinhardt in Eight Views," Theatre Arts Monthly, VIII (February, 1924), 103-110.

"Reformed but Cheerful Berlin," Literary Digest, L (February, 1915), 393-394.

"Reinhardt, Maker of a New Mimic World," Current Literature, LI (September, 1911), 311-313.

Reinhardt, Max, "Of Actors," Yale Review, XVIII (September, 1928), 31-38.

"Reinhardt on the Lot in Hollywood," Literary Digest, C (January, 1929), 22-23.

Rogoff, Gordon, "The Stage," Commonweal, LXXX (May, 1964), 177.

Saylor, Oliver M, "The Play of the Week," Saturday Review of Literature, IV (December, 1927), 484.

Saylor, Oliver M., "The Play of the Week," Saturday Review of Literature, IV (February, 1928), 567-568.

Sibley, Catharine S., "Memories of a Genius," California Monthly, CXIII (August, 1944), 40.

Silver, Lee, "Romeo and Juliet," Theatre Critics Reviews, XXVIII (February, 1967), 351.

"So Much Reinhardt to Do Much Shakespeare," Literary Digest, LXXV (December, 1927), 24-25.

Sterne, Maurice, "Reinhardt in the Church," Theatre Arts Monthly, VII (January, 1923), 15-20.

Talbot, Hayden, "The Dominating Figure in the New Theatre of Germany," Current Opinion, LXVIII (January, 1920), 53.

"Theatrical Taste in Germany," Literary Digest, XLIV (July, 1912), 106.

Van Doren, Mark, "The Miracle," Nation, CXVIII (January, 1924), 121.

Watt, Douglas, New York Theatre Critic's Reviews, XLVIII (April, 1967), 326.

Williams, H.W., "Chamber Drama in Germany," Contemporary, LXXXIV (September, 1908), 326-332.

Woodward, H.S., "Max Reinhardt's School of Acting in Vienna," Quarterly Journal of Speech, XV (November, 1929), 572-575.

Young, Stark, "Another Reinhardt," New Republic, LIII (December, 1927), 164-165.

Encyclopedia Articles

Hewitt, Barnard, "Max Reinhardt," The World Book Encyclopedia, Vol. XVI, Chicago, Field Enterprises Educational Corporation, 1964.

Kozelka, E. Paul, "Max Reinhardt," Encyclopaedia Britannica, Vol. XIX, Chicago, Encyclopaedia Britannica, Inc., 1962.

Newspapers

New York Times, November 7, 1943 .