THEATRE IN EDUCATION: A NEW THEATRE GENRE

by

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B.A., University of Winnipeg, 1980

A THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT

OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF

MASTER OF ARTS

in the Department

of

Theatre

[redacted]

We accept this thesis as conforming
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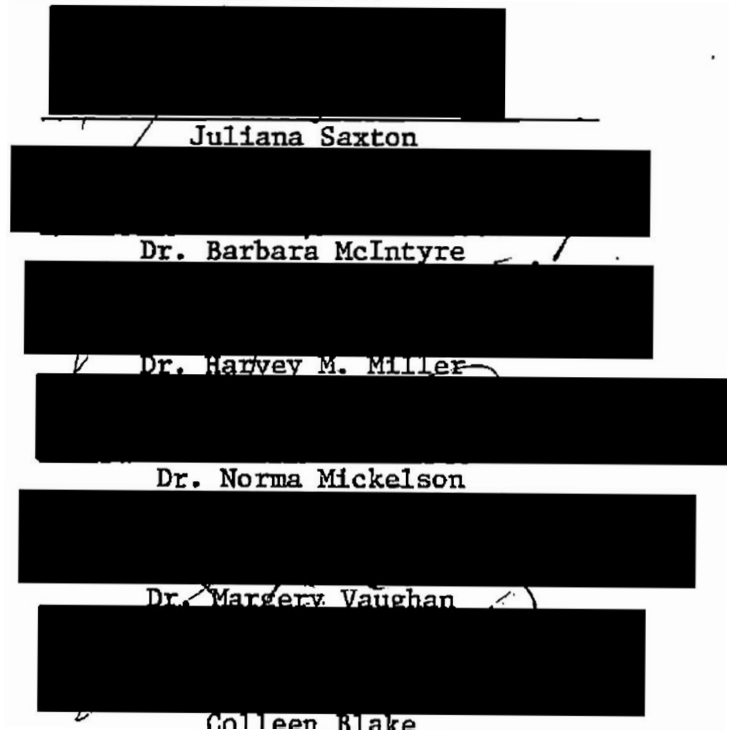
ABSTRACT

This thesis defines and defends the aesthetic and educational position of a new theatre genre, Theatre in Education (TIE) begun at the Belgrade Theatre in Coventry, England, in 1965. It was created through a liaison between the professional Belgrade Theatre and the Coventry Local School Authority and its purpose was to increase the involvement of the theatre and the community in serving educational objectives. This idea spread across the United Kingdom.

Three specific examples of Theatre in Education (TIE) programs involving the Belgrade Theatre of Coventry, the Cockpit Theatre of London and the Octagon Theatre of Bolton are described and a definition for the purpose of this thesis is derived as follows: "Theatre in Education is a form of theatre intended for audiences attending an institution of formal education. A TIE program is researched and created by its performers around a topic or theme of relevance to its intended recipients by either constituting part of their formal school curriculum or being of more general relevance to their life experience. A TIE program includes elements of orthodox theatre as well as sections of direct audience involvement which may include the physical and verbal participation in the dramatic conflict."

A discussion supporting the contention that Theatre in

Education should be considered a new theatre genre is conducted. Supported by the theories of education philosophers and theatre authorities Jerome S. Bruner, Susanne Langer, Bertolt Brecht and Peter Brook, a valuable argument is presented. It illustrates that the principles of progressive education which center on the active participation of the learner in the act of learning are transposed in TIE into a theatre event which centers upon the activity of the audience in the act of theatre. Thus, through a combination of orthodox theatre form, discussion, physical audience involvement in dramatic conflict, and carefully structured preliminary and follow-up activities, a viable new theatre genre has evolved in which education provides the context and theatre provides the means.



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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I wish to gratefully acknowledge Dr. Barbara McIntyre, who introduced me to the field of Theatre in Education and without whose untiring support this thesis would never have been completed.

I also wish to extend my thanks to Juliana Saxton for all her helpful and most valuable insights and criticism, as well as to the other members of my committee. Final thanks must be given to William Ferens, Linda Malloy, Wendy McPetrie and Tim O'Gorman for the parts they all played in seeing this through to its final stage.

PREMISE

The purpose of this thesis is to define and defend the aesthetic position of a new theatre genre known as Theatre in Education (TIE). Such a defense is needed because, as its name implies, TIE links theatre form with educational objectives, which some theatre practitioners feel invalidates it as an art form because a utilitarian, non-aesthetic function is being served. This thesis will counter this view by illustrating that the educational objectives served by TIE are similar to the aesthetic objectives of the most progressive theatre movements of our century, and that therefore TIE is a valid and most valuable addition to the theatre art form.

Because TIE is a new theatre genre and thus an unfamiliar one, Chapter One will begin by providing examples of the form. From these examples and with the aid of existing definitions, the definition of TIE to be used within this thesis will be derived. Then, in order to familiarize the reader with the philosophy and vocabulary of those practising TIE, its origins at the Belgrade Theatre, Coventry, England, will be briefly outlined.

Chapter Two will move to the educational origins of TIE; more specifically to the changes in educational philosophy occurring in the years following World War II which paved the way for its creation. Briefly summarized, these changes center

on a redefinition of the role education is to play in our rapidly changing times, and are to be found very clearly embodied in the work of the highly influential American educator, Jerome S. Bruner. Bruner believes that the primary objective of education must be the promotion of social change and enrichment. This is accomplished by treating the learning experience as an interaction between the learner and the material to be learned, for it is only through a highly active personal involvement in the knowledge-getting process that true learning will take place. Bruner defines true learning as an alteration of the individual's perceptions or consciousness, increasing his social awareness, and motivating him to alter his circumstances. Thus education will promote social change through the enrichment of the individual.

An exact parallel to this view in the field of theatre is to be found in the theories of the German playwright and director, Bertolt Brecht. As will be shown in Chapter Three, Brecht was one of the most important and influential theatre reformers of our time, and he concerns himself with the same issues being dealt with by progressive educators such as Bruner. Brecht feels that the purpose of the theatre artist is to enrich society and that in our era this means to change society. Chapter Three will delineate how he and those influenced by him have redefined the theatre event in order that it may fulfill this function. Briefly, this redefinition deals with a changed conception of

the part the spectator must play in the theatre experience. As in education, an attempt is being made to make the recipient of the material more actively involved, with the same aim of bringing about a change in consciousness that will in turn engender a change in society.

Chapter Four will illustrate how the practitioners of TIE have brought together these two powerful movements for social change into a new theatre form. It will be shown that TIE's adherance to educational objectives does not dilute its impact as an art form but has contributed a sound philosophical basis for its aesthetic, and the manner in which this aesthetic manifests itself in a unique theatre experience.

CHAPTER ONE

Theatre in Education: Descriptions, Definition and Origins

The purpose of this chapter is to provide a description and definition of the special genre of theatre known as Theatre in Education (TIE). Because the form is new and unfamiliar and is not based entirely on written scripts, I shall begin by providing descriptions of three examples of the TIE form. These examples as well as two existing definitions will then be employed in arriving at the definition of TIE to be used as the basis for all further discussion in this thesis. The origins of TIE at the Belgrade Theatre, Coventry, England will be discussed in order to familiarize the reader with the philosophy and special vocabulary employed by those working within this field. In order to facilitate the reader's understanding of the following descriptions, I will mention that the practitioners of TIE are known as actor/teachers, a group of actor/teachers is called a TIE team, and the TIE presentation is itself referred to as a program*.

TIE is essentially a British phenomenon, and therefore the most definitive examples of the form are to be found in the work of the British teams who pioneered and developed it. Following are three examples of the British theatre groups practising TIE: the Belgrade, the Cockpit, and the Bolton theatres of Coventry, London and Bolton, respectively. The

*Since TIE originated in Britain, this term is usually spelled 'programme'. For this thesis it has been amended to 'program' to conform to the standard usage of the University of Victoria.

examples were produced in 1970, 1977 and 1972.

Example One: The Emergent Africa Game - Belgrade TIE team, Belgrade Theatre, Coventry, England, 1970.[1]

The Emergent Africa Game is designed to be presented to a relatively large group (between 100 and 120 in number) of students, between 14 and 18 years of age. The students are seated in a horseshoe configuration around a 'playing area backed by a rear-projection screen'. They are addressed by a stage manager who asks them if they think they could goven a country and invites them to find out. The actors then present the Independence Day activities inaugurating the emergence of the new African nation of Lakoto: the presentation of the Parliamentary mace and the flying of the new flag.

The students are then introduced to Clare Furnival, a British reporter. It is this character who will interact most directly with the students, evoking their sympathy, mirroring their views, and providing them with a point of reference. In TIE, the character who serves this function is known as the 'link'. Clare, through an interview, familiarizes the students with the new Prime Minister, Okobo.

Following the interview, the students observe as the actors present various episodes, each of which involves a major policy decision for Okobo. At the conclusion of each episode,

[1]Stuart Bennett, The Belgrade's Bones: Fifth Year of Theatre in Education (1970), Annual Report of Coventry Belgrade TIE, pp. 25-27.

the actors join the students in discussion groups of between 12 and 15 members. After 10 minutes, discussion is terminated and the stage manager conducts a vote to determine which course of action is favored by the students. Okobo then reveals his decision and the reasons behind his choice and another episode is presented.

The students' input moves from the relatively passive mode of discussion to a more active form of participation when Clare is killed in rioting in a small border town. No longer able to depend upon her guidance, the students travel there themselves. They converge on the playing area (the town marketplace), and meet as two warring factions. A rebellion erupts between those who support Okobo and those who do not (pre-determined by the distribution of colored scarves). The stage manager interrupts the action before any resolution is reached, the students return to their seats and the rebellion is played out by the actors. The students are left with the question of which faction is better able to govern Lakoto and with the fate of the nation left tenuous and undecided.

Example Two: Marches - from Jarrow to Cable Street - Cockpit TIE team, Cockpit Theatre, London, England, 1977.[2]

Like The Emergent Africa Game, Marches is intended for an

[2]"Marches", from Jarrow to Cable Street, Learning Through Theatre: Essays and Casebooks on Theatre in Education, ed. Tony Jackson (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1980), pp. 181-201.

older age group (from 15 to 18 years of age). Unlike The Emergent Africa Game, however, it takes place in a theatre rather than the school. The students arrive at the theatre in the morning and view a performance created by the actors revolving around the rise of the British Union of Fascists in the 1930's. The play links the rise of the Union with the social and economic conditions in Britain at this time.

The afternoon is comprised of a workshop in which the students participate in 1930's situations based on the events considered in the play. Also included in the afternoon is a group discussion with certain characters from the play plus an open forum in which the students are again given the opportunity to question the characters.

A preliminary workshop for the teachers whose classes would be involved was held previous to this session at the theatre. Here the teachers were acquainted with the aims and methods of the project, their questions answered, and a teacher's packet of suggested follow-up activities distributed. Following the students' session at the theatre, follow-up visits by individual performers were made to the classrooms involved. These took the form of discussions based on contemporary parallels to the 1930's situations dealt with during the afternoon workshops at the theatre. The preliminary teachers' workshop and the follow-up visits are regarded as integral parts of the TIE program and not merely as extra services to the teacher.

Example Three: Gremian - Octogon TIE team, Octogon Theatre, Bolton, England, 1972.[3]

Gremian is an example of TIE for very young children. What follows is the performers' own description of their work:

> Gremian is a fantasy story about the last few Gremians to survive the long war with the Burks - parasites that are almost blind and need to attach themselves to the hands of the Gremians who are then forced to take them to their food, rubbish. The Gremians are trying to clear all the rubbish from the beaches, old train tunnels and rubbish dumps, etc., and travel about in their 'dormi'. During the story, the children help the Gremians to overcome the Burks and their leader. They are successful and the story ends happily. The story was a good example of logical fantasy, never taking advantage of the children's inexperience and never having to introduce magic to untie the knots in the plot. The 'dormi' was an important feature of the program. It was brightly colored with doors and windows and when the children were inside, sound effects and bright lights helped to create the illusion of journeying. The Burks were puppets, and as well as being seen fixed to an unfortunate Gremian's hand they could be heard scratching on the outside of the dormi or even

[3]"Gremian", Bolton Theatre in Education, Theatre in Education: New Objectives for Theatre - New Techniques in Education, John O'Toole (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1976) pp. 119-120.

> framed in the open window - like a puppet show. For some children the program was quite frightening but if they channelled their anxieties into activity and discussion with the Gremians they would live through the experience to the happy ending.

As one can see from the above, TIE programs vary considerably in their format, making it difficult to arrive at a definition. There are, however, major characteristics that will distinguish a theatrical presentation as TIE.

In the relatively limited amount of literature available on the field, two works may be considered as primary sources of information on TIE. They are Theatre in Education by John O'Toole, Lecturer in Drama and Theatre as Means of Communication, North Brisbane College of Advanced Education, and Learning Through Theatre, a collection of essays and casebooks edited by Tony Jackson, Lecturer in Drama at the University of Manchester. Both O'Toole and Jackson provide definitions of TIE in these works. Using these definitions plus the characteristics of TIE illustrated by the examples given above, a definition of TIE will be formulated that will serve as the reference for all further discussion in this thesis.

O'Toole states that programs:

> take place in schools (and) comprise a group of actors, working in role and in costume, working for and with children; each play, like

> any other, centers around definable characters in a state of dramatic conflict; all involve areas of theatricality and performance combined with areas where the members of the audience are directly and personally spoken to, even personally embroiled in the dramatic conflict; the subject matter of each play is clearly relevant to part of the curriculum .... (and) each has a specifically educational aim.[4]

Jackson states:

> The TIE program is not a performance in schools of a self-contained play, a 'one-off' event that is here today and gone tomorrow, but a coordinated and carefully structured program of work, usually devised and researched by the company, around a topic of relevance both to the school curriculum and to the children's own lives, presented in school by the company and involving the children directly in an experience of the situations and the problems that the topic throws up. (TIE) generally combines elements of traditional theatre (actors in role and the use of scripted dialogue, costume and often scenic and sound effects); educational drama (active participation of the children

[4]John O'Toole, Theatre in Education, p. 9.

> in improvised drama activities in which ideas are explored at their own level); and simulation (highly structured role-play and decision-making exercises within simulated 'real-life' situations).[5]

Both O'Toole and Jackson list a school setting as one of the defining characteristics of the TIE program. However, the program Marches took place within a theatre complex. Therefore, the aspect of the environment of the presentation will not be considered of importance in arriving at a working definition of TIE. For the purpose of this thesis TIE will be defined as follows: Theatre in Education is a form of theatre intended for audiences attending an institution of formal education. A TIE program is researched and created by its performers around a topic or theme of relevance to its intended recipients by either constituting part of their formal school curriculum or being of a more general relevance to their life experience. A TIE program includes elements of orthodox theatre form as well as sections of direct audience involvement which may include the physical and verbal participation of the audience in the dramatic conflict. Because TIE assumes an educational responsibility the program is tailor-made for a specific audience linked by age or common interest and is therefore not intended to reach a mass audience. Perhaps most importantly the TIE program is intended to operate as a stimulus

[5]Tony Jackson, Learning Through Theatre, p. ix.

for further exploration and learning on the part of its audience members.

The form of theatre known as Theatre in Education began at the Belgrade Theatre, Coventry, England on September 1, 1965. The mandate of the Belgrade was especially suited to the development of a form like TIE, because, as the first civic repertory theatre to be constructed in Britain after World War II, the Belgrade was committed to becoming an integral part of its supporting community. This community concern was also central to the aesthetic philosophy of the Belgrade's artistic director at the time of TIE's creation, Anthony Richardson. Richardson's philosophy was important to the establishment of TIE for two main reasons, the first hinging on his desire to have the Belgrade function as a significant and vital part of Coventry's social fabric. Gordon Vallins, assistant to the director of the Belgrade at this time, and head of the first TIE project states:

> (Richardson) believed that the theatre should be a meeting place for a variety of groups both young and old, and wanted the theatre to make a more direct contribution to the life of the community. He used to describe the theatre as a 'social necessity' and himself as a 'community servant'. In particular, he recognized the increasing importance of the theatre director's role in the pattern of community life. He had a vision and began to make policy decisions

> which involved moving towards a closer integration of theatre with society around it.[6]

Coupled with this policy, and perhaps more important to TIE's creation, was Richardson's personal concern for young people and the value and importance the theatre could have in their lives. As Vallins observes:

> (Richardson) wanted to interest children in the theatre from the age of three. His own children had been to the theatre from an early age and had seen many productions from Christmas plays to HAMLET. He noticed that they played out the basic stories and conflicts of the plays seen and often worked out problems in terms of game or story. He recognized the educational potential in children acting out problems.[7]

TIE's origins however, are rooted in education as well as the theatre. An awareness similar to that of Richardson's of the 'educational potential' of 'acting out' was also coming to the forefront of the thought of those educators concerned with developing a more progressive theory of learning. As O'Toole states, the growing community concern and social awareness represented in the theatre by men such as Richardson:

> "converged with another group of forces, perhaps even more dynamic - changing concepts of education. New understanding of learning processes ...

[6] Ibid., pp. 4-5, emphasis mine.
[7] Ibid., p. 4.

> led first to a search for new, more stimulating ways of presenting and adapting the curriculum content. Gradually in turn this (led) to changing concepts of the nature and function of education itself ...
>
> Among the leaders in this philosophical scramble have been the practitioners of educational drama ... Pioneered by Peter Slade and the post-war breed of local education authority drama advisers, rationalized in colleges and universities by such people as Dorothy Heathcote, Gavin Bolton and John Hodgson, made respectable by an H.M.T. official report ... This drama is very much influenced by the realization of the educative and exploratory nature of children's own games ... Situations of dramatic conflict, imaginative projection and role-play are set up to help children explore through improvisation the problems and possibilities of their identity, their surroundings, other people and the interplay of all three.[8]

O'Toole goes on to state that improvisation had already been in use in the theatre in a similar manner in order to aid the actor in clarifying his understanding of his character and the situations depicted in the script. Therefore, a recognizable link existed between the processes of theatre and education and because of this the education system was, in Vallins' words, "the most accessible area in which to start work" on Richardson's larger scheme of total community

[8]John O'Toole, Theatre in Education, p. 11.

involvement for the Belgrade.

Prior to the development of TIE, the Belgrade was involved with Coventry's young people through various workshops given at the theatre which were designed to familiarize the young people with the various aspects of the theatre art. TIE, however, was created to serve a more strictly educational function in comparison to these workshops and indeed to almost all other forms of theatre taken into the school environment. As Vallins states:

> How well the story (is) told in terms of theatre (is) a secondary consideration. The objectives of theatre (are) subordinate to the objectives of the classroom. We (are) attempting to use techniques of theatre in the service of specific educational objectives. We (are) not in the business of creating tomorrow's audience.[9]

The equal emphasis to be placed upon both the areas of theatre and education led to the choice of the name Theatre in Education. It appeared to Vallins:

> that the two (areas of theatre and education) should not be separated and (that) it was important to emphasize that .... professional (theatre) practitioners would be working within the education system.[10]

[9] Gordon Vallins, "The Beginnings of TIE", p. 13. Note that the objectives of theatre are considered subordinate only if one applies the objectives of the orthodox theatre to TIE. Chapter Three shall put forward an aesthetic and philosophy of theatre in which TIE will be shown to enhance rather than subordinate the objectives of theatre as an art form.

[10] Ibid., p. 9.

Because these professional theatre workers were responsible for educational as well as aesthetic concerns, they

> were actively acting and teaching and the dual role gave rise to the title of actor-teacher. This was important. All members of the team had to have an enthusiasm for and experience in both. The title actor-teacher was chosen because I (Vallins) was certain that TIE members should be actors who could teach - and ideally had received some kind of teacher-training, or teachers who could act. The work demanded what has become known as 'teaching in role', plus an ability to improvise, and a fundamental interest in the process of learning.[11]

O'Toole describes the device of teaching in role as follows:

> The teacher in a drama lesson ... sets up a context of vicarious experience for the children, who become the subjects of the learning process, selecting and controlling the learning objects. He (the teacher) may have to structure or deepen the involvement and the direction of the process, but to do this he must be sensitive to the individual and corporate energies within the improvisation, without destroying the continuity of the dramatic experience. Where better than from inside, and the teachers themselves ... learn to role-play.[12]

[11] Ibid., p. 12.

[12] John O'Toole, Theatre in Education, p. 12.

As indicated by Vallins above, a company of actor/teachers is known as a TIE team, reflecting the collaborative nature of the work. The process of collective creation undergone in producing a TIE program is called 'devising'. This process involves the choice of topic, any pertinent research, the compilation of teachers' materials, planning the visits, and of course the creation of the presentation itself. This entire body of work is considered the TIE program, of which Jackson states the following:

> the event in the school (or in the theatre-studio to which the pupils have been brought) is not the be-all and end-all of the exercise. The TIE programme, as the word suggests, will usually involve a fully conceived program of work with the theatrical event as the central stimulus for a deeper and richer learning process than the 'one-off' play (or indeed most other teaching methods) could possibly hope to provide. The pattern adopted by most TIE teams is to provide, first, an introductory teachers' workshop for all teachers whose classes will receive the program, the purpose of which is to explain fully the aim and method of the project and present an opportunity for discussion of the teacher's role; secondly, a project pack or teachers' notes which will contain relevant research material and suggestions for 'follow-up' to aid the teacher's subsequent work with the class; the program visits themselves; and, finally, some form of 'feed-back'.[13]

[13]Tony Jackson, Learning Through Theatre, p. ix.

Besides the fact that the term 'program' refers to this wide range of activities, TIE also differs further from the western orthodox notion of theatre as the presentation of a scripted play. The term 'play' or 'script' pertains to a piece of dramatic literature, the work of a playwright, which provides the basis for the work of the director, actor and designer, in their attempt to give it form in time and space. The term 'performance' is used to describe the presentation of this completed form to an audience which receives it as a set, finished project. Although key moments of the program may be scripted for clarity and effect, a TIE program is not generally based upon a script. This is partially due to the fact that it is created improvisationally by its performers. But also, because it intends to engage the spectator actively, it must retain its improvisational aspect if the spectator's contributions are to be utilized. Therefore the program is freer in form and its interaction with the spectator more spontaneous and integral than that of the orthodox theatre experience.

Because TIE attempts to involve the spectator, the time spent in interaction with him makes the presentational portion of the program considerably longer than the two hours or so we usually allot for a theatre engagement. As witnessed in the foregoing examples, the time spent by the team with the students encompassed the better part of a day and extended over more than one visit.

Finally, the team's responsibility for preliminary and follow-up material reflects a concern with making the theatrical event affect the daily lives of the students, of making the performance continuous with their everyday classroom activity and life experience. Unlike the 'one-off' play, as it is termed by Jackson, TIE desires to make the theatre a vital part of life rather than a diversion set apart. It is this desire to make the theatre experience continuous with and relevant to life experience that will be shown as the greatest contribution TIE has to make to contemporary theatre philosophy and aesthetics.

CHAPTER TWO

Education: Providing the Context

Although TIE was created within a professional theatre by professional theatre practitioners, we have also seen that its origins lie in changes occurring within the field of education, changes which enabled the Belgrade Theatre to work within the school system and create a genre of theatre directed towards the achievement of educational objectives. It is TIE's alliance and commitment to education, however, that produces the major difficulty in establishing it as a genre of the theatre art form. Ken Robinson, member of the British National Research and Development Project on the Teaching of Drama and international lecturer on the subject of drama, theatre, and the arts in education, states that many professional theatre practitioners feel "theatre work which (claims) an educational function ... (is) unconnected with, or unimportant to, what they themselves (are) doing".[14] This feeling is based upon what Desmond Davis, founder of the Carousel Players of Ontario, describes as a "traditional attitude" among theatre workers which sees education as "dull, unimaginative, and everything but entertainment".[15] These attitudes are both mistaken and unfortunate for they have caused the

[14] Ken Robinson, Exploring Theatre and Education (London: Heinemann, 1980), p. 1.

[15] Desmond Davis, Theatre for Young People (Musson Book Co., 1981), p. 143.

mainstream theatre worker to ignore TIE, a theatre genre which has been described as "a form of theatre that arguably represents one of the most significant developments in British theatre since the war."[16] The reason that many theatre professionals regard work such as TIE as unconnected to their own work is because they have no understanding of the concept of education that underlies its practice. Rather than being "dull, unimaginative and everything but entertaining", the type of education system which embraces the use of TIE is in itself a reaction to this traditional stereotype.

While it is obvious that the theatre professional views his art as extremely important, such a realization is very much lacking within its audiences. As the noted British director and theatre researcher, Peter Brook, states, in our day and age:

> culture or any art is (regarded) simply (as) an appendage on living, separable from it and, once separated, obviously unnecessary. Such art then is only fought for by the artist to whom, temperamentally, it is necessary, for it is his life. In the theatre we always return to the same point: it is not enough for writers and actors to experience this compulsive necessity, audiences must share it, too. So in this sense it is not just a question of wooing an audience. It is an even harder matter of creating works

[16] Tony Jackson, Learning Through Theatre, p. vii.

> that evoke in audiences an undeniable hunger and thirst.[17]

What the specific demands of the educational setting provide for the practitioner of TIE is an in-depth knowledge of a particular audience, its needs, desires and interests. It provides also a body of theory on how best to communicate with this audience once topics of relevance have been established. This familiarity with its audience and clarity in aims and objectives gives TIE a context within which to begin creating works that can evoke a "hunger and thirst", a "hunger and thirst", moreover, not created out of the desire to simply "woo an audience", but established through the course of achieving TIE's primary objective: the enrichment of the intellectual and emotional life of its young audiences.

The first thing one must understand about the educational climate which nurtured TIE is that a re-examination of the function of education within society had been occurring for some time. For example, Robinson states that in Britain during:

> the 1940's and 1950's there was a creeping unrest with the materialism which had come to dominate post-war society and its institutions, including education ... One attempt to address these problems took place in 1957 ... (when) Herbert Read spoke out on the subject of 'Humanity,

[17]Peter Brook, The Empty Space (McGibbon and Kee, 1968; Penguin, 1979), p. 148.

> Technology and Education' ... As (Read) saw it, the preoccupation with technological advance was turning schools and colleges into production lines of myopic specialists ... 'free from all idealistic entanglements, free above all from originality of any kind'.[18]

In an attempt to balance this preoccupation with technology, which occurred at the expense of other less-utilitarian modes of knowing and experiencing the world, educators began to perceive a new role for education, a role which closely parallels that traditionally given to the realm of art: the perception of the significance of our existence. The development of this viewpoint is very clearly expressed in the work of Jerome S. Bruner, the American psychologist and internationally recognized leader in the field of cognitive development and its relation to knowledge acquisition. In his book, Toward a Theory of Instruction, Bruner states that, "Man's use of mind is dependent upon his ability to develop and use 'tools' or 'instruments' or 'technologies' that make it possible for him to express and amplify his powers".[19] Under the heading of such 'tools', Bruner includes not only the 'hardware' which is used to amplify man's physical ability to manipulate his environment, but also what he terms 'software'. This 'software' consists of those conceptual tools such as language which man

[18] Ken Robinson, Exploring Theatre and Education, p. 145.

[19] Jerome S. Bruner, Toward a Theory of Instruction (Cambridge: Belknap Press, Harvard University Press, 1966), p. 24.

has developed, not in order to alter, but to make sense of and structure his world. In speaking of the necessity for such 'software' Bruner states that we possess:

> a highly limited capacity for taking in and processing information. We honor that capacity by learning the methods of compacting vast ranges of experience in economical symbols - concepts, language, metaphor, myth, formulae. The price of failing at this ... is either to be trapped in a confined world of experience or to be the victim of an overload of information.[20]

As pointed out by Robinson, our century has for the most part emphasized the production of technological 'hardware'. This has had a great effect upon our educational system, for in line with the demands of society, Bruner has found that the "first response of (our) educational systems ... (has been) to produce technicians and engineers and scientists as needed".[21] However, as Bruner goes on to state, this educational emphasis fails to engender a comparable development in the 'software' necessary for dealing with the technological changes propagated by the production of more and more "technicians, scientists and engineers". We are, therefore, in danger of becoming "victims of an overload of information", for, as Bruner concludes:

> no specific science or technology (can provide) a metalanguage in terms of which to think about

[20] Jerome S. Bruner, On Knowing (Harvard University Press, 1962) pp. 6-7.

[21] Jerome S. Bruner, Toward a Theory of Instruction, p. 33.

> a society, its technology, its science and the constant changes these undergo with innovation. Could an automobile engineer have foreseen the death of small-town America with the advent of the automobile? He would have been so wedded to his task of making better and better automobiles that it would never have occurred to him to consider the town, the footpath, leisure, or local loyalty.[22]

The effect of this short-sightedness on the part of the automobile engineer is only one example of the fact that, due to the rapid advances of technology, now more than ever, man requires a structure or a world view at a very deep level. He must be able to come to terms not only with the vagaries of his daily existence, but with the fact of existence at all.

Each man must be provided with the opportunity to answer in a way meaningful for himself the so-called great questions of birth, death and morality. He must possess ideals and originality, for as Susanne Langer, perhaps the foremost authority on art as a mode of knowing and author of the seminal works, Philosophy in a New Key and Feeling and Form, states, man's intellect has provided him, alone amongst animals with a:

> power of envisagement, which puts on him a burden that purely alert, realistic creatures do not bear - the burden of understanding. He lives not only in a place, but in Space; not only at a time, but in History. So he must

[22] Ibid.

> conceive a world and a law of the world, a pattern of life, and a way of meeting death. All these things he knows, and he has to make some adaptation to their reality.
>
> Now, he can adapt himself somehow to anything his imagination can cope with; but he cannot deal with chaos.[23]

Chaos, however, is increasingly what we are confronted with, for as Langer in agreement with Bruner, goes on to say:

> Human life in our age is so changed and diversified that people cannot share a few, historic, "charged" symbols that have about the same wealth of meaning for everybody. This loss of old universal symbols endangers our safe unconscious orientation. For some future generation, an aeroplane may be a more powerful symbol than a ship ...; (however) poetic simile, not spontaneous metaphor, is its status as yet ... virtually all the realities of our modern life are thus new ... (and therefore we lack a means of constructing) a meaning and sense in the world ... a unified conception of life whereby it can be rationally lived ....
>
> A mind that is oriented, no matter by what conscious or unconscious symbols, in material and social realities, can function freely and confidently even under great pressure or circumstance and in the face of hard problems ... If, now, the field of

[23] Susanne K. Langer, Philosophy in a New Key (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1957), p. 287.

> our unconscious symbolic orientation is suddenly plowed up by tremendous changes in the external world and the social order, we lose our hold ... Technical progress is putting man's freedom of mind in jeopardy.[24]

To return to Bruner's terminology, the 'software' or concepts which in the past have afforded man with a 'unified conception of life' and an 'unconscious symbolic orientation' have traditionally been supplied by the myths and metaphors developed by a community and shared and disseminate primarily through that community's religious practices and works of art. These could then be considered the prime agents of cultural transmission. However, with the increasing complexity and technological expertise of our age has come an emphasis upon the rational, analytic, and empirical application of knowledge as it is employed by 'technicians, engineers, and scientists'. Given this emphasis, it is the formal education system that has come to be perceived as the major force within a culture, staffed by specialists to train specialists. Since the formal education system has come to replace, for the most part, other, more indigenous, means of cultural transmission, it is the opinion of those, who like Bruner are concerned with the quality of our intellectual functioning, that the education system must assume the responsibility for those institutions it has usurped. Education must undertake the role of providing its charges

[24] Ibid., pp. 287-292.

with the ability to create for themselves a 'meta language' with which to cope with their constantly changing world. Further, this meta-language should promote a change in the quality of our lifestyle. Bruner admits that such a radical redefinition of the concept and function of formal education 'will repel some scholars', but that in the light of the imbalance between man's ability to alter his world with his ability to understand and function capably within it, such a redefinition is necessary.

The standard conception of formal education is that it is the presenter of objective empirical fact, to be memorized and repeated. However, since education has become a major opportunity for young people to come in contact with the ideas which motivate and organize our culture, it must as Bruner states:

> no longer strike an exclusive posture of neutrality and objectivity ... <u>let knowledge as it appears in our schooling be put into the context of action and commitment</u>. The lawyer's brief, a parliamentary strategy, or a town planner's subtle balancings are as humanly important a way of knowing as a physicist's theorem. Gathering together the data for the indictment of a society that tolerates, in the United States, the ninth rank in infant mortality when it ranks first in gross national product is not an exercise in radical invective but in the <u>mobilizing of knowledge in the interest of conviction</u>

> <u>that change is imperative.</u> Let the skills of problem solving be given a chance to develop on problems that have an inherent passion - whether racism, crimes in the street, pollution, war and aggression, or marriage and the family ...
>
> (This will involve) a vast change in our thinking about schools ... (and) about the assumption of responsibility in the technological world as we know it ... The objective is to produce skill in our citizens, skill in the achieving of goals of personal significance, and of assuring a society in which personal significance can still be possible.[25]

A similar statement, with few modifications, could have been written by one concerned with the modern theatre, for it is just such a call to impassioned criticism which can be perceived behind the major theatre reforms of our century.

There are two main reasons that the theatre has come to be viewed, to use Brook's words, as an unnecessary 'appendage' rather than as an integral element of social life. The first lies in the attitude of our society, which has come to value technology and the practical application of knowledge above all other pursuits, and thus regards art as a 'frill'. Secondly, the reaction of artists to the above attitude is to blame. Instead of attempting to deal with the problems of society, they have retreated behind an argument of art for art's sake.

[25] Jerome S. Bruner, <u>The Relevance of Education,</u> (New York: W.W. Norton and Co., 1971), pp. 115-117. Emphasis mine.

Michael Straight, in an address given in 1970 when he was Deputy Chairman for the (U.S.) National Endowment of the Arts, summarized the relationship of the artist to society as follows:

> The arts in Plato's day were the means by which great men conveyed the great truths of their time to the great majority of their people ... in the Nineteenth Century, (however), the tension between the artist and society sharpened to an active hostility and rejection. Industrialization (and our resulting pre-occupation with technology) brought into being a governing class with no inherited taste or acquired concern for beauty ... Commercialism in society and Romanticism in art (has since encompassed) most of our history.[26]

Practitioners within the educational system began to recognize the dangers to our well-being inherent in this emphasis upon practical, empirical knowledge at the expense of other, less utilitarian modes of knowing. A similar awareness was also occurring within the theatre, resulting in a movement to make it again an integral, vital part of man's cultural experience.

One of the most significant proponents of theatre with a social purpose, whom Bradby and McCormick, co-authors of People's Theatre refer to as 'generally acknowledged to have been the most important single influence on the development of

[26]Michael Straight, "Emergence of a Democratic Culture", Children's Theatre Review, No. 4 (1970, p. 21).

theatre in the last thirty years',[27] is the German playwright and director, Bertolt Brecht. Peter Brook, who himself deserves similar superlatives, calls him the:

> strongest, most influential and most radical theatre man of our time ... No one seriously concerned with the theatre can by-pass Brecht. Brecht is the key figure of our time, and all theatre work today at some point starts or returns to his statements and achievements.[28]

In perhaps the most concise statement of his philosophy and aesthetic, entitled "A Short Organum for the Theatre", Brecht writes the following:

> A few hundred years ago a handful of people ... performed certain experiments by which they hoped to wring from Nature her secrets ... they transmitted their discoveries to people who made practical use of them.
>
> (As a result) crafts which had progressed by methods virtually unchanged during a thousand years now developed hugely ... Soon mankind was showing powers whose extent it would till that time scarcely have dared to dream of ... (Our) surroundings changed increasingly from decade to decade, then from year to year, then almost from day to day. I who am writing this write it on a machine which at the time of my birth was unknown. I travel in the new vehicles

[27] David Bradby and John McCormick, People's Theatre, p. 118.

[28] Peter Brook, The Empty Space, p. 80.

> with a rapidity that my grandfather could not imagine ... With my father I already spoke across the width of a continent, but it was together with my son that I first saw the moving pictures of the explosion at Hiroshima.[29]

This statement, as it moves from the progressive aspects of man's increasing scientific and technological expertise to its more destructive ramifications, strongly echoes the beliefs of Bruner and Langer. Here is ample proof of the dire results of technological advancement carried out with no understanding of its long-term consequences. As Brecht stated in an earlier essay, entitled "On Experimental Theatre", man's knowledge of the social processes which govern his existence has not kept pace with his scientific knowledge. The result, as he states, is that "nowadays nearly every new discovery is greeted with a shout of triumph which transforms itself into a shout of fear".[30] Given the crises in our understanding articulated by Bruner and Langer and so powerfully manifested in the nuclear threat, Brecht felt that art could no longer afford the luxury of an ivory tower built upon the belief of art for art's sake. He stated that although in the light of such disasters as Hiroshima it is easy to regard our so-called social progress as a 'disease' or a 'decay', theatre and the arts must not be used as a means of escape or of setting up "a kind of bastion of the mind against the realities of our social condition".

[30] Ibid., p. 133

Rather, he urges in words similar to those of Langer that the theatre must, along with the other arts "form the 'ideological superstructure' for a solid, practical rearrangement of our age's way of life".[31] Just as Bruner recognized in the field of education, Brecht realized the theatre could "no longer strike an exclusive posture of neutrality and objectivity". The theatre must also put knowledge in the "context of action and commitment".

This view, however, is in direct opposition to the aesthetic position which has become entrenched in the course of the separation of the arts from the concerns of society. In his book, The Art of Time, Michael Kirby, sculptor, theatre artist, and noted critic of the "avant-garde", describes this now orthodox aesthetic position as one in which:

> the values of a work are unrelated to practical life and lie only in the experience itself. This is consistent with the ... view that art is separate from life: its significances are of its own order and not related to mundane existence.[32]

This is exactly the type of position which must be mitigated if the theatre is to become necessary to anyone besides the artists who practice it and depend upon it for their livelihood. Brecht recognized that in order for the theatre to be set "once more in its proper social context" it must dispel "the

[31] Ibid., p. 23

[32] Michael Kirby, The Art of Time, (New York: E.P. Dutton and Co., 1969), p. 48.

professional's view of the theatre as an end in itself". Brecht, as Bradby and McCormick go on to point out, "wanted the theatre to accept its responsibilities as THE social art, with the utilitarian purpose of communicating with ordinary people about the matters that most concern them".[33]

Just as Bruner recognized that a radical redefinition of education would be unpalatable to most scholars, so Brecht realized that a redirection of the theatre experience would be resisted by many professionals. Reform could hardly be carried out within the mainstream theatre which had set itself up to feed the orthodox aesthetic notion of theatre as a diversion and an escape. He states:

> Great apparati like ... the stage ... impose their views as it were incognito. For a long time now (the mainstream theatre has) taken the handiwork ... of intellectuals who share in (its) profits - that is, of men who are economically committed to the prevailing system ... and processed it to make fodder for their public entertainment machine ... Values evolve which are based upon (this) fodder principle ... (leading) to a general habit of judging the apparatus by its suitability for the work.[34]

Obviously what Brecht is stating here is that the mainstream theatre is not suitable as a means of dealing with contemporary

[33]David Bradby and John McCormick, People's Theatre, p. III.

[34]Brecht, Brecht on Theatre, p. 34.

problems in a significant manner. Because it has become so entrenched in repeating formulas of past success in "wooing an audience", it has become stale even as a form of diversionary entertainment. Peter Brook characterizes the modern mainstream as "Deadly Theatre", of which he states:

> The Deadly Theatre can at first sight be taken for granted ... This is the form of theatre we see most often, and it is most closely linked to the despised, much-attacked commercial theatre ... All through the world theatre audiences are dwindling ... the theatre not only fails to elevate or instruct, it hardly even entertains.[35]

Obviously, if the theatre wishes to re-establish itself as a social institution, it cannot do so within this existing system, which Brecht recognized. He felt that the theatre could only achieve its purpose of "communicating with ordinary people about the matters which most concern them" if it let itself "be carried along by the strongest currents in its society and associates itself with those who are necessarily most impatient to make great alterations there". Then, as if in anticipation of the radical eduational philosophy of educators such as Bruner, Brecht urges those concerned with rejuvenating the theatre to "edge as close as possible to the apparatus of education".[36] Thus we can see that rather than an association with dullness, TIE's alliance with education brings to it a potential to carry

[35] Peter Brook, The Empty Space, pp. 11-12.
[36] Brecht, Brecht on Theatre, p. 186. Emphasis mine.

out the reforms desired by the "most important single dramatist and theorist in ... this century",[37] Bertolt Brecht. Education, under the influence of men like Bruner, is searching for means to enhance our perception of the significant patterns of our existence. It can, therefore, be viewed as providing a context within which the theatre can pursue its parallel aim and similarly educative role of providing, in Brecht's words, "models of man's life together such as could help the spectator to understand his social environment and both rationally and emotionally to master it".[38]

Reforms in education have caused it to embrace an aim parallel to that of the major theatre reform movement in our century: to aid man in understanding and mastering his world by revealing the pattern and significance of his actions as a social creature. The orthodox theatre has become divorced from this aim and is no longer a suitable context for pursuing it. Therefore it is necessary to next examine an aesthetic position that will result in a form of theatre which can act as an agent of social change.

[37]Bradby and McCormick, People's Theatre, p. 133.

[38]Brecht, Brecht on Theatre, p. 133.

CHAPTER THREE

Theatre: Providing the Means

TIE remains unfamiliar to most theatre practitioners because its educational stance isolates it from the mainstream of theatre practice not only because it literally removes TIE from the theatre complex, but because of a negative attitude among theatre professionals towards work directed at achieving non-aesthetic educational objectives. Chapter Two illustrated that the objectives of the most progressive educational and theatrical movements of our time are in fact the same. Both fields are united in a desire to effect social change, especially in the area of balancing the emphasis being placed on technological advancement with more "human" values and ways of knowing.

The mainstream theatre is not suited to achieving these objectives because it has become entrenched in an aesthetic of art for art's sake, a position which does not view the problems of "mundane existence" as the proper concern of the realm of art. Therefore, if the theatre wishes to become a vital social force it must search for alternative venues and forms to replace the orthodox theatre experience. Given the similarity of philosophies and aims, the education system can be seen as providing an ideal context for the development of a socially relevant form of theatre. The Belgrade took advantage of this and the result was the creation of TIE.

The first hurdle to be faced in a defense of TIE as a theatre genre rather than educational aid is the establishment of an aesthetic position to replace the orthodox notion of art for art's sake. In other words, an aesthetic must be arrived at which centers on the belief that art can and must affect the quality of human existence. Michael Kirby, in The Art of Time, handles this problem most effectively.

Kirby first concedes that art "by definition, does not have a practical purpose. It is not created to accomplish a particular physical result". He asserts, however, that:

> On the other hand, it may certainly have psychological and sociological implications and consequences.

And he goes on to explain:

> A tool is used to achieve a certain desired change in the state or condition of things; art is not a tool. But changes also occur without the use of tools ... Thus art, even though it does not have a practical use, may cause changes.[39]

[39]Michael Kirby, The Art of Time, p. 52.

Specifically, the type of change Kirby is concerned with in regard to the aesthetic experience is "changes in the consciousness of man". He states that

> most of experience may be integrated into consciousness without changing the character or nature of consciousness itself; some types of experience, on the other hand, can cause a complete change in the structure ... of consciousness.[40]

Kirby goes on to illustrate that art is of the order of those experiences which can alter man's consciousness. He admits that there is not a way to actually establish a "causal relationship" between art and cultural change, but feels that it "would seem unlikely, however, that changes are not due, in part, to art. Art is vitally interrelated with the rest of culture, and the proposition that it can originate changes should not be too difficult to accept". Given the above, he concludes that a "work of art can be seen as significant to the extent that it tends to change basically the consciousness of man", the ramifications being that if "art is able to alter fundamentally the consciousness of man, it will indirectly produce changes in practical areas of life ... Thus an artist may be seen as acting directly on the world".[41] Given the acceptance of this aesthetic viewpoint, that art can affect the nature of society through

[40] Ibid., p. 53.

[41] Ibid., p. 53. Emphasis mine.

the alteration of the individual's consciousness or perceptions, what remains is to create a theatre form capable of providing an experience which can cause a complete change in the structure of consciousness.

Peter Brook gives the following impressions of the theatre experiences which he feels have produced a change in his consciousness:

> I know of one acid test in the theatre. It is literally an acid test. When a performance is over, what remains? Fun can be forgotten, but powerful emotion also disappears and good arguments lose their thread. When emotion and argument are harnessed to a wish from the audience to see more clearly into itself - then something in the mind burns. The event scorches onto the memory an outline, a taste, a trace, a smell - a picture. It is the play's central image that remains ... When years later I think of a striking theatrical experience I find a kernal engraved on my memory ... I haven't a hope of remembering the meanings precisely, but from the kernal I can reconstruct a set of meanings. Then a purpose will have been served. A few hours could amend my thinking for life. This is almost but not quite impossible to achieve.[42]

From these impressions we can glean that the major characteristics of a truly significant theatre event are that it promotes an activity of assimilating and reconstructing perceptions in a manner that makes them personally relevant and memorable.

[42]Peter Brook, The Empty Space, p. 152. Emphasis mine.

This is of great interest because such activity is the same as that employed in our everyday acquisition of knowledge. Ken Robinson, in Exploring Theatre and Education, describes the manner in which we structure our perceptions into a manipulatable conceptual framework as follows:

> We do not live in a world of static social realities ... Our personal construction of reality ... is an active rather than a passive process.
>
> We come to see things as we do partly because of the experiences we undergo. But events do not simply happen to us. We make them happen, and, in a way, we happen to them: we influence what is going on through our own actions and responses. We are implicated in a continuous process of interaction and negotiation with the ideas and actions of others. We approach new experiences through our existing framework of ideas and values. (In Kirby's terms our existing state of consciousness.) These may be modified in the light of fresh experience; these changes will in turn affect how we come to make sense of subsequent experience. (To return to Kirby, our consciousness has been altered.) If we construct a reality to lean on, by means of this continuous dialect, we are constantly reconstructing it ... This is the basic process of the creative mind:

> testing new relationships, fresh formulations and novel variations of ideas in the successive interpretation and re-interpretation of experience ... it is not a special process at all, but the common way in which we try to make sense of everyday events and relationships.[43]

Given the similarity of Robinson's description to the views expressed by Kirby and Brook regarding the nature of the significant theatre experience, one can conclude that the aim of the significant theatre experience is to stimulate the knowledge-getting process within its recipient, or to bring about the act of learning. The relationship of this aim of education is self-evident. For example, Bruner describes the ideal formal learning situation as follows:

> a curriculum reflects not only the nature of knowledge itself but the nature of the knower and the knowledge-getting process. It is the enterprise par excellence where the line between the subject matter and method grows necessarily indistinct. A body of knowledge, enshrined in a university faculty and embodied in a series of authoritative volumes, is the result of much prior intellectual activity. To instruct someone in these disciplines is not a matter of getting him to commit

[43]Ken Robinson, Exploring Theatre and Education, pp. 161-162. Emphasis mine.

> results to mind. Rather, it is to teach him to participate in the process that makes possible the establishment of knowledge ... to take part in the process of knowledge-getting. Knowledge is a process, not a product.[44]

We can see that the philosophy, aims and objectives of progressive education and of a theatre which desires to be of social significance are totally compatible and that an adherence to educational aims in no way harms the integrity of the theatre art form. TIE serves educational objectives in the course of achieving its aesthetic aim of social relevance.

The key to being able to effect a change in consciousness in both the learning and the theatre experience lies in the ability of the experience to engage the active thinking process of its recipient, and it is here that the orthodox theatre form is most inadequate. As art and society began to separate their concerns from one another, the theatre began to focus almost exclusively on the activity on the stage with little thought given to promoting a joint activity with those in the auditorium. Richard Schechner, a leading American theatre innovator, founder of The Performance Group, and director of such seminal collective theatre creations as Dionysus in '69, describes this situation as follows:

> In the orthodox theater the creative circle is closed. As many channels as possible except for words and the

[44] Jerome S. Bruner, Toward a Theory of Instruction, p. 72. Emphasis mine.

> prearranged gestures of the performers are shut off, hidden, truncated, sidetracked, demolished. Although the audience is present at an orthodox theater performance, "presence" is a way of saying "as absent as can possibly be arranged" ... (actors) learn how to systematically exclude the audience ... The orthodox theater is a closed system ... because the audience is excluded from it ... any exchange is frozen out of the orthodox theater.[45]

Brecht himself fought against this detrimental aspect of the traditional theatre form. He describes spectators at a performance of the orthodox theatre as follows:

> Looking about us, we see somewhat motionless figures in a peculiar condition: they seem strenuously to be tensing all their muscles, except where these are flabby and exhausted. They scarcely communicate with each other; their relations are those of a lot of sleepers ... True their eyes are open, but they stare rather than see, just as they listen rather than hear ... Seeing and hearing are activities, and can be pleasant ones, but these people seem relieved of all activity and like men to whom something is being done.[46]

[45] Richard Schechner, Environmental Theater, (New York: Hawthorne Books Inc., 1973), p. 72.

[46] Brecht, Brecht on Theatre, p. 187.

However, the significance of the theatre art lies in its ability to alter consciousness, which depends on the spectator actively creating or re-creating his thought structures. It is an activity the spectator must do for himself; it cannot be "done to him". Therefore, in order to establish the theatre as a significant event, Timothy J. Wiles, Assistant Professor of English at Indiana University, proposes a definition of theatre as an interaction between actor and spectator, and thus between the spectator and the ideas embodied by the work. He states that the theatre must admit:

> The audience into a creative role ... art exists not only in objects by which we know it but also in the experience of those who perceive it, their existential presence is a component of art. In other words, art is not art "in general" but is made up of the particular, unrepeatable interactions between the original creator's work and each of its new recipients, a transaction which leaves neither party unchanged. Of course art possesses an aspect as a tangible and unchangeable object, like a statue, just as it possesses an aspect as a changing and change-making interaction. Perhaps theater exists to illustrate this second aspect ... for more than any other, theater art depends upon living and present mediators, actors and audience, for both its meaning and its existence ... Seen in these terms, the theatrical performance

> is an enactment of more than just the play at hand: it is an activity in which we of the audience act, much as do the actors ... the creative interaction of the literary text, actor's art, and spectator's participation (is) "the theater event" ... (which) integrates the creative aspects of literature, actor and audience into a totality, one which may change all the parties involved.[47]

An aesthetic position has been established which not only accepts but demands that the theatre perform the educative function of altering the consciousness of its audiences if it is to be regarded as a significant art form. In order to achieve this aim the spectator must become an integral part of the event and be allowed and encouraged to actively exercise his intelligence. From the examples of TIE given in Chapter One it is obvious that every opportunity is made to allow for audience participation. Chapter Four will examine this and the other formal aspects of TIE to present it as an example of a vital theatre of interaction.

[47] Timothy J. Wiles, The Theater Event, (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1980), pp. 2-3. Emphasis mine.

CHAPTER FOUR

TIE: A Theatre of Interaction

A vital theatre experience for any audience must be based on the interaction between that audience and the ideas and concepts embodied in the performance. In the previous chapters the fact that TIE is designed for young audiences has been purposely de-emphasized in order to underline this basic theatre principle. Such interaction is imperative if the theatre is to achieve its aim of social change. Only an interaction similar to that of our everyday method of processing knowledge can bring about a change in the perceptions and attitudes of audience members. A theatre of interaction is possible only when the spectator is regarded as an actual, integral part of the experience rather than as a removed, passive observer. It is only if he is so included that the possibility arises that he will articulate or reflect upon his responses and in that manner examine and consolidate his ideas and attitudes. Such self-assessment is at the heart of true learning and will allow any insights offered in the presentation to be taken away by the spectator and applied in parallel life experiences. In this manner the theatre experience becomes continuous with life experience. Previously it was stated that it is the success of TIE in achieving this

aim that will be shown as the greatest contribution TIE has to make to contemporary theatre philosophy and aesthetics. This is TIE's major contribution because TIE shows how this ideal can be accomplished in practice through the evolution of a form based upon the needs of the specific audience it desires to reach.

While interaction with the spectator is central to the aims of any vital theatre experience, it is especially crucial when one is dealing with the young spectator. Brian Way, the British director and theatre educator, has spent most of his career working for and with young people and observing their reactions to the theatre event. From his vast experience he has come to the conclusion that:

> Audience Participation ... is a phenomenon that exists within the children themselves ... all theatre, for whatever age group or kind of audience, calls for and even depends upon the participation of the audience. (As evidenced by the definition of theatre given by Wiles as a changing and change-making interaction). For the majority of theatre experiences, the main areas of participation, however, are intellectual, emotional and spiritual ... (children however) not only ... participate with their mind, their heart and their spirit, but also give vent to (these) inner reactions ... (by externalizing them) through additional vocal and physical participation.[48]

[48] Brian Way, Audience Participation (Boston: Walter H. Baker Co., 1981), pp. 1-2. Emphasis mine.

That TIE has recognized and utilized this special characteristic is due to the philosophy of its parent theatre, the Belgrade. This consideration of audience needs manifests the main principle behind the Belgrade's mandate of total community involvement: "not starting with the theatre (event) and moving out towards the people, (but beginning) with a particular group of people and (trying) to foster a type of theatre suitable to them and to their concerns".[49] The ability of TIE to achieve this aim in a suitable form has come from its alliance with education and its resulting familiarity with theories relating to the nature of the young, developing intelligence. As Christel Hoffman, author of the article "The Children's and Youth Theatre in the GDR: Tradition, Development and Aspects", states:

> The children's and youth theatre has no special object of presentation (i.e. aesthetic or philosophical) but a specific spectator ... (Its) message is differentiated by the fact that ... (it) addresses a public which is in the process of development. The audience of the children's and youth theatre is classified to age groups, with development-conditioned differences in the need for theatre and in the receptiveness of the age groups.[50]

[49] Bradby and McCormick, People's Theatre, p. 13.

[50] Christel Hoffman, "The Children's and Youth Theatre in the G.D.R.: Tradition, Development, Aspects", Assitej Quarterly Review, April-June (1973), pp. 18-19.

Those working for young audiences have derived their knowledge of these developmental-conditioned differences in the need and the receptiveness for theatre from the findings of developmental psychology being employed by progressive educators such as Bruner. These findings are in great part due to the pioneering work in their field done by the world-renowned Swiss psychologist, Jean Piaget, and his colleagues. Robinson explained previously that reasoning is an active process. What Piaget found was that for younger children it is also physically active. In other words, while the adult has the power to reason abstractly and covertly, the young person must act concretely and overtly in order to build the mental structures upon which his later ability for abstract thought will rest. C.M. Charles of California State University, in his summary of Piaget's work entitled Teacher's Petit Piaget, puts the implications of the above for education as follows:

> Thought grows from actions, not from words. Knowledge cannot be given to children. It must be discovered and constructed through the learners' activities. Children learn best from concrete experience.[51]

While all art has the capability of producing a change in consciousness, theatre is perhaps most naturally suited to this educative function because it is the art of making experience concrete. The theatre operates through the medium

[51] C.M. Charles, Teacher's Petit Piaget, (Belmont, California, Ferron-Pitman Publishers, Inc., 1974), p.4.

most familiar to us, the thoughts, feelings and actions of human beings. It is even more suited to the needs of the young audience because it bears a marked resemblance to the child's natural and preferred method of learning through "concrete experience": make-believe play. This is what Vallins meant when he stated that Richardson, the artistic director of the Belgrade, was aware of the "educational potential in children acting out problems". Tag McEntegart, a stage manager of the Cockpit TIE team, in an article entitled "Play and Theatre", describes the parallel educative potential of theatre and make-believe play as follows:

> The movement of thought and the development of consciousness ... is always pushing forwards ... The pace of this movement can be a snail's pace if there is little to challenge "old knowledge", or through experiences such as play or theatre which allow the future to be explored in the real present through the creation of an imaginary situation, it can move in leaps and bounds.
>
> Theatre, through its movement in the field of meaning, contains as much potential for assisting the mental development of its audience as play does for ... children ... Theatre is a reciprocal activity where the actors attempt to do what a child does for himself in play, that is set up the most exciting and pleasurable way to explore the meaning of the world ... if theatre contains

> the same attributes as play ... (then) theatre's role in the process of mental development is inevitable and will inevitably lead audiences toward future action based on the thoughts that have arisen through this development.[52]

Given the similarity of theatre to their own natural behaviour, the reaction of a young audience to the experience will, of necessity, be more immediate and direct than that of an adult audience. The overtly active nature of the young intelligence places unique demands upon the form; as Rosalind Asquith, a British freelance journalist, who has been involved in community theatre in Britain as a teacher, photographer and designer, describes:

> Theatre is the mimetic representation of action: it mirrors life. Children's play is permeated with mimetic modes of behaviour ... (therefore children) perceive in the actor's mimetic behaviour something deeply familiar, (making) passive spectating ... not nearly enough.[53]

What is necessary, therefore, in providing a significant theatre experience for the young spectator is a theatre form that will utilize this natural impulse to participate in the theatre

[52]Tag McEntegart, "Play and Theatre", S.C.Y.P.T. Journal, No. 7, (1981) pp. 47-48. Emphasis mine.

[53]Rosalind Asquith, "The Arena of Exploration", Dreams and Deconstructions, ed. Sandy Craig (Amber Lane Press Ltd., 1980), p. 87.

event and which will heighten and enhance this activity into a process of exploration and learning.

Thanks to the efforts of concerned and informed theatre practitioners like Way, some form of participation is now viewed as an established element of most theatre presentations for young audiences. Much of it, however, is what O'Toole refers to in Theatre in Education as "non-integral" participation. The audience may be permitted or encouraged to verbalize and may be allowed some physical input, but its contributions are extraneous to the dramatic action and in no way affect the world of the play. Allowances are being made for the natural inclination to participate, but the full educational impact of this response is ignored. TIE, however, because of its deep educational commitment, attempts to deepen the level of this participation in order that learning, or an alteration of consciousness can come about. TIE fully utilizes the powerful similarity between theatre and play by heightening the child's own exploration through the clarity and selectivity of an art form. It pushes the child beyond that which he would accomplish in his own play. Therefore instead of merely being allowed extraneous input, as evidenced by the examples given in Chapter One, in the TIE program as O'Toole states:

> the children may be integrally involved in the play itself, playing parts not only important to the structure, but also crucial to the dramatic conflict ... being allowed to take over the playwright's

> role; the outcome may be constructed to depend on schemes they make and decisions they take.[54]

Of the three examples used in Chapter One, Gremian most clearly manifests the totally participational form a TIE program may take. This is because it is the one program of the three intended for very young audiences. As stated earlier, our need for overt exploration or play declines with age and the development of our abstract reasoning abilities. Because the other two programs are intended for older audiences, total physical participation is not crucial and may even be detrimental for adolescents who are more self-conscious and can be alienated by a sudden demand to 'perform' in front of their peers. Thus the practitioners of TIE, because of their knowledge of their audience gleaned from a close alliance with education, have been able to tailor-make theatre events based upon the specific needs of that audience. As O'Toole goes on to point out, it is TIE's creation of integral participation, or as he puts it:

> (the) quality of harnessing the children's desire to be actively involved in an experience created for them and with which they identify ... (that is) the really significant contribution that the TIE movement has made to the field of theatre.[55]

[54] John O'Toole, Theatre in Education, p. 17.

[55] Ibid., pp. 17-18. Emphasis mine.

Significant, because based on a specific desire and a sound knowledge of and respect for their intended audience, the TIE practitioners have evolved a theatre form truly capable of bringing about a change in consciousness.

Such a level of committed participation on the part of the audience is not easy to attain. This accounts for the extension of a theatre performance into what has become known as a program. The three programs used as examples in Chapter One will now be examined in order to illustrate how the use of participation or interaction with the audience makes the TIE program a theatre event powerful enough to bring about a change in perception that its recipients can carry into their everyday lives.

The elements of participation within the TIE program can be discussed using the three areas: theatre, simulation and educational drama, outlined by Tony Jackson in his definition of the TIE program.[56] The element of presentational theatre is evident in the programs Marches and The Emergent Africa Game. In both programs this is the initial contact with the audience and paves the way for later audience input. However, even in this least participational aspect of the program, the audience is acknowledged. For example, in The Emergent Africa Game the character of the stage manager addresses the audience directly, as do Clare Furnival the reporter and Okobo the Prime Minister, in the same manner as they would address another

[56]Tony Jackson, Learning through Theatre, p. ix.

character on stage; the audience is part of their world. The relationship with the audience in the presentational portion of Marches is less obvious. The play presented here is termed a 'documentary' play, which means that it is based upon factual accounts, transcripts and descriptions presented almost verbatim but transposed into a piece of theatre. In this type of performance the spectators are addressed as participants at the meetings, speeches and rallies which often comprise portions of the documentary play. In sections not directed to the audience, the acting style is such that the material is presented to it rather than solely contained on stage between the actors involved in the conflict at hand. Thus, here also, the audience is acknowledged and taken into the world of the performance.

This presentational aspect of the portions of orthodox theare form within the program paves the way for the next level of participation, simulation, defined as "highly structured role-play and decision-making exercises within simulated 'real-life' situations.[57] Jackson refers here to such devices as the portions of presentation followed by discussion and decision-making in The Emergent Africa Game. The participation here is comprised of objective intellectual assessment of the simulated situations followed by the opportunity for the audience to consolidate its responses in discussion and the formation of policy decisions for Okobo. As discussed above,

[57] Ibid.

such verbal participation is best suited to the developmental stage of the older age group involved in this program. Having Okobo move on the decision of the audience rather than upon a pre-determined response was probably rejected by the team as too unwieldy an alternative given the scope of the program and the size of the audience. Also, in reality, governmental decisions are not based upon a consensus between all those they will affect, but do become the prerogative of those elected to power.

The Emergent Africa Game moves into the area of integral participation when the audience enters the playing area to become the rioting political factions of Lakoto. This is the third element to be considered, educational drama or "the active participation of the children in improvised drama activities in which ideas are explored at their own level."[58] The major difference between this involvement and that of the simulation is that the audience becomes physically and emotionally embroiled in the drama. The action is no longer objectively observed but subjectively experienced by the audience. Thus intellectual assessment is tempered by emotional involvement, an important factor in any of the attitudes we hold in reality. This is also the aim and function of the afternoon drama workshops based upon the situations presented in the documentary play in the

[58] Ibid. This thesis will not examine the contributions made by the strategies and methods of drama educators to the form of the TIE program. Their influence is recognized, as is the similarity of many TIE and DIE techniques.

program Marches. Such emotional involvement is also possible in a powerful piece of solely presentational theatre but, as mentioned earlier, younger children require concrete experiences in order to develop their understanding. Therefore Gremian, the program intended for a very young age group, bases itself entirely upon this form of participation.

Whatever form or level of participation the TIE team deems suitable to the scope of its program and the needs of its audience, its use is directed at one goal, to create a response within its recipient. The TIE program takes this response a step further, however, in that the event is structured in such a way that the recipient is allowed to utilize his response, to clarify it for himself. It is this element that enables this theatre event to actually exert the effect of a real life experience. Pam Schweitzer, editor of the three-volume Methuen Young Drama series of TIE programs entitled Theatre-in-Education, states:

> Once the child has spoken for himself the new ideas, dilemmas, concepts, once he has applied them in the TIE programme, they are part of his experience and can be recalled and used by him in related situations ... in his own life.[59]

Schweitzer's support for this statement comes from the

[59] Pam Schweitzer, ed. Theatre-in-Education: Four Junior Programs (Eyre Methuen Ltd.) p. 8. Emphasis mine.

theories of active intelligence and cognitive development already outlined. The view that an imaginary situation can exert the same effect as real life experience is given credence by the attention given to make-believe play as a natural learning mechanism. In fact, because it is not a real experience, an imagined event can be more fully explored, more alternatives considered, because there is no chance it will affect our lives unless we wish it to. Here, unlike in reality, we are in control.[60] As adults we still make use of play, but in line with our increased capacity for abstract thought, we do so covertly; rehearsing anticipated situations or reliving past experiences in our mind's eye until we understand and can deal with them. As a theatre event, TIE is able to heighten the impact of imagined experience because of the selectivity and resultant clarity which, as a work of art, it provides to our more raw perceptions.

It is upon this belief in the power of our imagination to alter our thinking, and thus our reality, that any theory of socially relevant, vital art is based. The recipient of the work, however, must have or must develop an understanding of and commitment to the ideas being presented to him. In the theatre, this understanding and commitment is most likely to occur when the recipient is treated as an integral part of the experience, when he comes to have a stake in the dramatic conflict. Another program, The Price of Coal, produced by the Belgrade Coventry TIE

[60] For further discussion see Chapter Four "Learning in Make-Believe Play and Drama" pp. 30-40 in Gavin Bolton's Towards a Theory of Drama in Education (Longman Group Ltd., 1979).

Company in 1980, will now be examined to illustrate how the audience interaction within the event is structured to bring about the understanding necessary for learning to occur.

The Price of Coal is a two-visit program aimed at one class of nine and ten year olds. The size of the audience is limited in order that this program can operate entirely using the integral participation of the group to unfold the story. David Pammenter, a member of the devising group, states that the intention of the program is to create "some understanding of how coal mining and mines developed from humble beginnings, and the price, both in human and technological terms, at which those beginnings developed into the industry we have today".[61] As one can see, the creation of such in-depth, subjective understanding of a topic is far from the sugar-coating of facts and figures that is often considered the use or abuse TIE makes of the theatre form. As Pammenter states:

> To approach the subject (of coal mining) purely appealing to, or placing demands on, the intellectual ability of the child is a much simpler task but in our view any intellectual overview, devoid of subjective understanding, would not have the makings of a good programme. The objectivity produced by such an exercise would, on its own, not have carried the depth, weight and true history

[61] David Pammenter, "The Price of Coal", Theatre-in-Education: Four Junior Programmes, p. 19.

> of the miners anywhere except perhaps as some arid lecture in sociology.[62]

What the Coventry TIE team desired to accomplish through the use of their interactional theatre form was to develop a program "that in all senses stimulates, demands, polarizes attitudes and forces the practitioner and the participant into the forum of the direct experience of the learning process".[63]

The program is relevant to its community as it deals with the history of the mines surrounding Coventry, beginning with their inception in the late sixteen hundreds and moving up to Lord Shaftesbury's Coal Mines Act of 1842. A full transcript of the program can be found in Pam Schweitzer's Theatre-in-Education: Four Junior Programmes, upon which the following description is based. What will be considered here is the activity of the children in order to illustrate how the participation of the audience is used to create a truly vital theatre experience.

The class has been prepared ahead of time for a visit by someone who will speak to them about mining. The actor playing the part of Ben Partridge enters and begins to discuss modern mining practice with them. He then turns to the beginnings of coal mining in the Coventry area, telling the class they will be seeing the story of his ancestor, another Ben Partridge, and meeting other people who have a part in this story as well.

[62] Ibid., p. 21.
[63] Ibid. Emphasis mine.

Ben removes the modern mining gear he is wearing, revealing a period costume circa 1680, and reads off a list of names. Those students whose names appear on this list are told to accompany him to the school hall.

This program, then, begins with the children where they are. It enters their world on their terms and does not demand that they become immediately involved in a topic or situation they may initially know nothing or care nothing about. The first step is to create a connection between their present and the past. This time gap is bridged by the continuity of Ben's family in coal mining. Ben provides them with the facts necessary for them to begin to understand the topic, at the same time gradually endowing the class with the role of Warwickshire miners which they will then maintain for the duration of the program. For example, after they have left the classroom, Ben immediately addresses his group as follows:

> You and me, we all live on Arbury Estate ... I've worked as a woodman for Lord Newdigate ... for nigh on twenty years now ... Now, all of you would have worked with me at some point as foresters. Till all the trees were chopped down that is. Then we all lost our jobs ... Over a year without any money ... Anyway, we're on our way to Arbury Hall now to see Lord Newdigate ... to find out if there's any work going on his estate. Not that there ever is.[64]

[64] The Price of Coal, p. 26.

The first decision the students face is whether or not to accept Lord Newdigate's offer to become miners in his new coal mines. Obviously, for the program to continue, they must accept. Ben, however, will play devil's advocate, arguing against their initial decision whatever it is, in order that it is not made glibly or lightly. The group must realize the importance of this offer, they must need to become miners, but they must also realize the dangers and discomforts involved.

The group which remained in the classroom meets the character of George, a Shropshire coal miner, and they become endowed with the identity of his comrades during a monologue similar to that of Ben's. Both groups are then led through a session of a common TIE device for deepening and consolidating audience involvement, occupational mime. Occupational mime is the learning, through mimed activities, of the life and job skills central to the audience's role. In this case, it gives both groups an inkling of the rigours of their lives as miners and roots them physically in the world of the program. As Pammenter states:

> what should happen if the program is performed correctly is that the child learns the real price of coal in both class and technological terms. One of the ways in which this is achieved is that the work sessions in the script should genuinely be hard work for the child, so

> that the child is tired and sweaty at the end of it ... This is not only to provide a richer environmental experience as close as we can make it to the original, but also because the physical strain informs the struggle from which (later) decisions (will) spring. Nothing in this program takes place in a vacuum. The decision(s) taken (grow) out of the child's physical, intellectual and emotional involvement and this is why the learning situation ... is such a vital one.[65]

Unlike an orthodox theatre event, here the audience does not share one point of view. The two groups undergo different experiences and therefore their perceptions, attitudes and prejudices will not coincide, an element which will heighten the program's impact when they will meet later.

Both groups become aware of a problem. Ben's group is not producing coal fast enough for Lord Newdigate. Therefore, they are not making any money. George's group meet their new bailiff, or foreman, Eames, who imposes unfair working conditions and makes them sign a two-year bond to work exclusively for him. George's group decide to break their bond when Lord Newdigate offers to hire them to teach their mining technique to Ben's group. The same principle of 'devil's advocate' applies to the discussions and decisions occurring in George's group. Throughout the program

[65] Ibid., pp. 21-22.

a decision is never accepted and acted upon until the children are forced to articulate and defend their viewpoint. Before George's Shropshire miners meet the Warwickshire group, Ben instils antagonism toward the arriving outsiders within his colleagues. The split between the group loyalties is strengthened when the children see a fist fight between George and Ben.

The students begin to learn cooperation when they are placed into integrated groups by Lord Newdigate as a disciplinary measure. They then find out that Eames has been hired by Newdigate to increase his mine's production. The opposing miners are finally consolidated by experiencing a mining disaster caused by Eames' negligence in which George is killed and which Eames makes Lord Newdigate believe was George's fault.

This all-day first visit ends with the closing of the mines because of the death. The actor playing Ben drops his character, telling the class that in a few weeks they will see the rest of the story, beginning with Ben's great grandson. For this break between visits, the team will have provided the teacher with suggestions for activities which will deepen the class' understanding of the concepts behind the situations they have experienced. Such follow-up is integral because it will increase the understanding and expertise the class can bring to their next role, making the program a richer experience for them. Because such additional work is central to the achievement of the program's

aims it is viewed as an aesthetic responsibility. It is by carefully structuring such material that the team begins to encourage the merging of the theatre experience with the class' everyday experience. The notion that a theatre event can be a stimulus to thought is being planted.

The second visit deals primarily with the effects of industrialization upon the mines. Ben's great grandson, Jim Partridge, is an inventor. His innovations to help his fellows, however, such as an underground railway car and safety lamps, end by harming them. Because the machines improve productivity and working conditions, quotas and work hours are increased. As Jim's father, another Ben, tells the student/miners:

> All the time, new machines were being brought down the pit. And each one meant that we was forced to work harder, and longer. And, of course, working so hard, we never had enough time to pay proper attention to safety, so all the time miners were getting injured and losing limbs and even being killed.[66]

Thus Ben begins to initiate the idea of striking for better working conditions but this option is not taken because a Royal Commission is arriving at which the miners will be able to air their grievances.

Such large, formal meetings are often part of the TIE

[66] Ibid., p. 88.

program. It is within them that all the learning undergone throughout the program is consolidated because the students must articulate their views to an outsider. Moreover, they must win him over and with language official enough to impress him. Before doing this, they must examine exactly what it is that they think and feel. An additional learning outcome of this type of meeting is the extension of vocabulary and language skills as the students attempt to document their grievances in appropriate terms.

Throughout this second visit, the class has observed Jim siding more and more with Lord Newdigate, urging talk and compromise as the way to solving their problems. His father, Ben, is more militant, urging strike. The climax involving the juxtaposition of these views occurs when Ben returns to the mine after it has become full of a deadly gas, in order to retrieve a safety lamp which he would have to pay for if lost. Lord Newdigate attempts to prevent Jim from going down into the mine to save his father, stating that Jim's technical expertise and inventive mind are too valuable to lose for the sake of a solitary miner. Jim breaks free and returns with his father's body draped over his shoulder, most painfully made aware of the real "price of coal". The program ends when the actor playing Newdigate drops character and addresses the class as follows:

> This is the end of our story. But before you go, I wonder if any of you remember when you

> first met Ben Partridge two weeks ago, he said to you that the history of coal mining was written in blood ... Well, at that time you possibly weren't sure what that meant, but you've probably got a clearer idea now. However, it is because so much coalminer's blood was spilled in the pits and because so many coal miners were killed that gradually over the years conditions for miners did improve. When you think of that, perhaps you'll also feel that Ben Partridge and George Pearson didn't die for nothing ... Thank you very much. (He waits until the audience leave.)[67]

Most programs are left open-ended in this manner. A case has been powerfully presented but no solution takes effect within the theatre experience itself. The students must carry away their impressions and mull over their ideas on their own. That the event will continue to affect their thinking is again ensured by the structuring of appropriate follow-up activities.

Virtually every element of the TIE program is designed to elicit an audience response and to deepen that response into an act of learning. Through the understanding and commitment engendered in the audience through the use of participation, TIE becomes an event powerful enough to capture the thoughts and imaginings of its audience for some time to come. The practitioners of TIE have, therefore, succeeded in creating a vital theatre

[67] Ibid., p. 112.

form truly capable of passing Peter Brook's "acid-test".

David Pammenter, in the conclusion of his introduction to The Price of Coal, states that TIE programs are "forums for the evaluation, both subjective and objective, of human experience. This is ... the essence of education".[68] It is also the essence of the theatre art. The most progressive and influential educational and theatre movements of our century are linked by a desire to effect social change through an increased understanding of the social processes which govern our existence. Modern education became a context within which a theatre, intent upon becoming a means to this aim of social enrichment, could develop by providing necessary insights into the mechanisms of learning and cognitive development, insights that stress the importance of the active participation of the learner in the process of knowledge acquisition. Through the use of audience participation, TIE transposes this educational principle into theatre practice, the result being a new and unique addition to the theatre art form. TIE is most definitely a new genre of theatre, and a most valuable one, for it reaffirms the power and potency of the theatre event when it is operating out of a deep respect and commitment to its most important component, the audience it exists to serve.

[68] Ibid., p. 22.

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April 1985