

JEAN-LOUIS BARRAULT:
Theatrical Innovation in the 1960's

by

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Abstract:

This thesis project, "Jean-Louis Barrault: Theatrical Innovation in the 1960's," is an exploration of Jean-Louis Barrault, the twentieth century French actor, mime, director and producer, from 1931 to 1968. The purpose of this project was to explore Barrault's work: his methods and his theories, and in particular one time period which included both the direction of a company or theatre, and the direction of an innovative production. Thus the 1960's were chosen, for during the period of 1959-1968 Barrault was director of a National theatre, the Odéon-Théâtre de France (created in 1959), and the director of his own company, founded in 1947: La Compagnie Madeleine Renaud•Jean-Louis Barrault. As director of the Théâtre de France, he would unwillingly play an important role in the May Revolution of 1968. Barrault was also solely responsible for the adaptation and staging of Rabelais' five novels: this was Rabelais (1968), an innovative production which can be seen as a culmination of all his previous years in the theatre.

Divided into four chapters, this endeavor examines four aspects of Barrault and his work in the theatre. Chapter One explores the major influences on Barrault, and a few of his more important theories and concepts. In Chapter Two, his direction of the Odéon-Théâtre de France is looked at, including an examination of the methods used to run the

theatre, the climate in which it was created, and the ways in which Barrault improved the original goals for the Théâtre de France. The third chapter investigates the student revolt of 1968, with respect to the occupation of the Odéon and its social and political context. The protesters' complaints and demands are analysed, in addition to an exploration of the actual events and their effect on Barrault and his management of the Théâtre de France. The final chapter, Chapter Four, examines the innovations in Barrault's adaptation and staging of Rabelais in 1968. The analysis of this production pulls together many of the elements discussed in the first three chapters of this thesis project.

The information for this project comes from a number of different sources, with a variety of conflicting viewpoints. Originally, a good portion of Barrault's writings were read: books, articles, lectures, and interviews, in order to gain a sense of Barrault's methods and theories. Next, reviews of productions, articles, and books about Barrault and his work were examined in order to create an objective context for his own subjective expression of his work. All this was then put into the larger context of what was occurring theatrically and politically around Barrault and his theatre, culminating in the political (and theatrical) explosion of 1968 when French students and workers claimed Barrault's theatre in the name of the Revolution.

The conclusions drawn from this study of Barrault's methods, theories, productions, actions, and reactions can be best described in one word: innovator. Barrault, it seems, has worked tirelessly since 1931, always anxious to work on the next production, whether as actor or producer, director or adaptor. He is a man with theatre in his blood, always hungry to explore a new idea, concept or theory; ready to learn what any new real or theatrical experience can bring.

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ABSTRACT

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

	<u>Page</u>
Preliminary Pages	i.
Abstract	ii.
Table of Contents	v.
List of Illustrations	vi.
 Chapter I: Barrault and the Theatre	 1
 Chapter II: The Odéon-Théâtre de France: 1959-1968	 41
 Chapter III: The Odéon-Théâtre de France and the May Revolution: 1968	 57
 Chapter IV: <u>Rabelais</u> : 1968	 92
 Bibliography	 137
 Appendix I: A Chronology of Jean-Louis Barrault..	 146
 Appendix II: Productions at the Odéon-Théâtre de France under the Direction of Jean-Louis Barrault: 1959-1968	 149

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

	<u>Page</u>
Figure 1: "Training in Mime"	39
Figure 2: <u>Autour d'une Mère</u>	39
Figure 3: <u>Les Enfants du Paradis</u>	40
Figure 4: Plan of Odéon: 1987	56
Figure 5: Occupiers in the Odéon-Théâtre de France	91
Figure 6: M. Renaud as "Warda": <u>Les Paravents</u> (1966)	134
Figure 7. J. L. Barrault as "The Mouth": <u>Les</u> <u>Paravents</u> (1966)	135
Figure 8. Set of <u>Rabelais</u> (1968): Elysée- Montmartre	136

CHAPTER I

"Barrault and the Theatre"

Thirty years after the fact, Jean-Louis Barrault sees his decision to audition for Charles Dullin at the Théâtre d'Atelier in January of 1931, at the age of twenty, as a need of his artistic nature. Born September 8, 1910, in Le Vésinet, a suburb of Paris, he recalls: "I desired the theatre like a sin ... [and] sin is the one thing one cannot not do."¹ His commitment to the theatre was total, but it is doubtful that either Barrault or Dullin could have foreseen the impact Barrault would have on the theatre world. He gave wholeheartedly of himself to his art and received in return a large and dedicated audience, one that followed him from theatre to theatre, from venture to venture. Entering the theatre in the early thirties was a piece of timely luck; the years between the two world wars were some of the most fertile and productive of twentieth century France, and thus Barrault had the opportunity to work with many of the great actors and directors: Charles Dullin, Jacques Copeau, Antonin Artaud, and Etienne Decroux. The influence these men had on Barrault was unmistakable. They were his teachers; he repaid the debt by putting their theories into practice.

Barrault's career is remarkable, if only for the many years it has spanned, as both actor and director, although what he has accomplished is noteworthy as well.² He is perhaps best known for his directorship of the state-supported Odéon-Théâtre de France (1959-68), a post he

received from André Malraux as part of the cultural and theatrical reforms Malraux initiated while cultural minister to Charles de Gaulle (see Chapter II). In addition, Barrault was a member of the Comédie Française from 1940-46, becoming a Sociétaire in 1942. The decision to become a Sociétaire at the Comédie Française was a big one, for it was an irreversible decision and committed Barrault for the rest of his life. However, in 1946, due to problems within a changing administration at the Comédie, members were given the option to leave. Barrault, Madeleine Renaud (his wife), and seven others chose to do so.

Thus, in 1947, he was able to fulfill another dream. the creation of the Compagnie Madeleine Renaud•Jean-Louis Barrault, which for twelve years was one of the best independent, self-sustaining (and self-supporting) repertory companies France had ever seen. As well, Barrault has appeared in more than twenty-five films, using the money he made to help subsidize his other projects. This brief outline of Barrault's work does not even begin to take into account the great variety of styles and authors he has worked with since 1931, and the number is staggering.⁴ However, in order to better understand the innovative nature of his work throughout his career and at the Odéon, it is necessary to know more about Jean-Louis Barrault. This chapter, then, will focus on who Barrault is, taking into account the practitioners whose work most strongly

influenced him, his pet theories, the significance of the work he has done, the characteristics he possesses as actor and director, and his stature in France by 1959, when he took over the Odéon-Théâtre de France. First, however, the political, social, and theatrical context in which Barrault was working until he became director of the Odéon-Théâtre de France must be briefly examined.

Theatrical Context

As has already been noted, the period between World War I and II was a time of great theatrical productivity in France. Although theatrical production was stifled somewhat during the German Occupation, the growth and experimentation continued, and the theatre that emerged after World War II combined the zeal of interwar theatre and the passion of the theatre which existed despite the Occupation. Moreover, it is doubtful that post-war theatre could have been as vibrant, had the interwar experimentation not taken place, for it paved the way for many avant-garde techniques and authors. Jean-Louis Barrault, who worked steadily through these years, noted in 1968:

My first appearance was in 1935, in a play by Faulkner. Since then, 30 years are past, and I have lived through the vicissitudes of mankind, history reflecting different things at different times in my work.⁵

This statement is apt, for Barrault was continually

experimenting with different theories and genres.

Dorothy Knowles, in French Drama of the Inter-War Years, divides French Theatre of 1918-1939 into three categories: Boulevard, National and Studio. "Boulevard Theatre," she writes, is a term "used of all those theatres which are solely or mainly commercial enterprises."⁶ These theatres catered mainly to an upper class audience, and presented light, farcical entertainment. Farces such as L'Hôtel du Libre Echange (1894) by Georges Feydeau, and melodramas like Henri Kistemaeker's L'Embuscade (1913), were the norm. The National Theatres, the most important of which has always been the Comédie Française, represented "an educational institution and museum of national culture [that was] prevented ... from opening its doors to young playwrights,"⁷ but rather was dedicated to traditional French works and authors such as Molière and Racine. Barrault, in Memories for Tomorrow (1974), recalls:

I love customs, and ... those of the [Comédie] Française delighted me from the first. When I walked up the staircase leading to the level of the stage, I never failed to stop for a moment in front of the bust of Molière, to touch him with my fingertips, or lay before him a small bunch of violets.⁸

Finally there were the studio or art theatres, of which there were a great number, all with slightly different orientations, but all falling under the term avant-garde. What they had in common was a dedication to new authors and

new production techniques. Antonin Artaud, Jacques Copeau and the Cartel des Quatre (Charles Dullin, Louis Jouvet, Gaston Baty and Georges Pitoeff) were the most important producers of this new trend in theatre, and it was during this period that authors such as Cocteau, Mauriac, Pirandello, Anouilh, Claudel and Gide first came to the attention of French theatre patrons.

Until the period of the German Occupation in France, French theatre had existed almost solely in Paris. Despite the difficult circumstances under which the French were living (great material scarcity, black-out conditions, the ban on the heating of public buildings⁹), they flocked to the theatre, and gradually theatre spread to the provinces where, too, the houses were full. This small-scale decentralization "was to become progressively more important after the war, as the two streams diverged widely in the fifties and sixties."¹⁰ Thus by the mid-sixties many permanent, provincial companies existed, with regional support to help finance them, and with a new generation (Jean Vilar and Roger Planchon, for example) creating, directing, and producing.

But the theatre of post-war France is notable for more than just the beginning of decentralization. Certainly it made a difference, for definitions of the different genres were becoming far less rigid, and Copeau's dream of rotating repertory became more common and universally accepted.

Furthermore, the list of new authors was seemingly endless and new subjects, as well as new methods, were being tested. Also, experiments designed to explore how theatre was created were seen more regularly: la création collective was one such experiment. Ariane Mnouchkine's Théâtre de Soleil (1968) was based on this idea. Of this fertile period, Barrault recalls:

The post-war period was bringing a new climate. The aesthetic stage of before 1931 was succeeded by the ethical stage ... The individualist and poetic theatre of the Cartel [Jouvet, Dullin, Pitoeff, and Baty] was giving place to social theatre. From 1950 onwards, the audience has been bound more closely to the stage ... The 'artistic' approach was now 'contested' by the intellectuals ...¹²

Political Context:

Politically, the years between the two great wars were not stable in France. There was much inner turmoil, and within factions of right and left wing politics, different groups were fighting each other. Although Hitler's propaganda was well known, Germany's attack on Czechoslovakia took most French people by surprise, for many French had convinced themselves that Germany represented little threat. Charles de Gaulle, it seems, had insight into what the war would bring, but his advice was ignored. Thus, by late 1940, France was forced to surrender, and the period of the Occupation began.¹³ In 1944, de Gaulle, who

during the Occupation had been the recognised leader of the Resistance,¹⁴ became, as France's greatest hero, head of a provisional government, and then, in 1945, head of a new régime. Unfortunately, his aims for this government were not in keeping with the majority's desires, and after two months he resigned.

For the next twelve years, until 1958, when de Gaulle again took office, no one party or person led France for more than eighteen months at a time. This period was known as the "six month governments,"¹⁵ during which time one hundred and two different régimes attempted to govern France. In addition, another war disabled the country, this one in the French colony of Algeria, fighting for independence. Thus, when de Gaulle again came to power in 1958, his main goal after so many years of instability was to make France great again. He pushed for atomic weapons and power, reformed the franc and thus helped lower the cost of living, thereby giving France a chance to compete with the Common Market.¹⁶ He brought his beloved country out of chaos and helped it regain its stability.

Social Context

During this period of chaos, the French worked to rebuild the damage done by the war. More sophisticated machinery was appearing on farms; new houses and factories were being built at an amazing rate. Labour unions were

finally being organized and working hours reduced.¹⁷ The number of people moving to cities was steadily increasing, a trend which had begun during the nineteenth century and continued through both major wars of the twentieth century. Also, the level of education was rising. The era was extremely productive. Perhaps because of the difficulties out of which they were emerging, the French were doing everything in their power to move forward.

The chaos of the years until 1958 affected Barrault mainly insofar as it affected his work. Barrault continued to work zealously throughout this period, creating theatre that had no particular political bias. "I am basically anti-politique,"¹⁸ he says, always making a point of keeping politics out of his theatre. He remained active, and in the early 1970's wrote, "During the Occupation there was only one recourse: to be active. To be as active as honestly possible, simply that. When the war was over, would one faint?"¹⁹ He was not fond of fighting, nor of the military in general, for during the First World War his father had died while on military leave, and his family received no pension. It is perhaps because of these associations that Barrault was able to remain relatively removed from a time so filled with pain and heartache. He was called up for active duty, but thanks to Jacques Copeau, who wanted him to play "Rodrigue" in Le Cid at the Comédie Française in 1940, his tour of duty was actually cut quite short. It was long

enough, however, to see the atrocities of war, and to mourn the deaths of fellow artists such as Robert Desnos, the poet, whose fates were not as lucky. During the Occupation, he was safely surrounded by the protective walls of the Comédie Française, an institution beyond reproach, even to the Nazis. After the war, and until 1959, he was able to do what he wanted, thanks to a dedicated audience and the money he made by appearing in films.

Influences:

Eric Bentley speaks of Jean-Louis Barrault as "eclectic ... If there is a philosophy that is central to his work," he continues,

it is a philosophy not of life or literature, but of theatre. His real masters are not Claudel and Artaud, but Copeau, Dullin, and Decroux ... To accept him, you have to accept the theatrical enterprise -- in all its chaos.²⁰

Thus despite Barrault's admiration of Claudel as both friend and poet, and his agreement with Claudel on many elements of theatre (especially the importance of diction and rhythm to both character development and the synthesis of a production), Barrault was more concerned with the works themselves, as examples of life made theatrical. Of Partage du Midi (1948), a perfect example of real experience made theatrical, Barrault says: "Claudel had no sooner made fresh contacts with his work than he relived it and found that the

original experience was as alive and cruelly moving as when it first occurred."²¹ That Claudel often recreated his life experiences in his plays held a great fascination for Barrault, for they were at once real and theatrical.

In contrast, Artaud became a sort of hero in Barrault's eyes, for he was so vibrant, so filled with pain. Their relationship was based above all on friendship, and because they tended to deal with one another on an emotional rather than intellectual plane, Barrault would always have a great understanding of Artaud's needs, and therefore of his theories. They met while at the Théâtre de l'Atelier (1931-34) where Artaud had been the resident poet, but it was not until after the creation of Autour d'une Mère (1935), an adaptation of the Faulkner novel As I Lay Dying that was Barrault's first experience as director (he acted in it as well), that the friendship really developed. Autour d'une Mère was an extravaganza of geste, and was important to both his creativity and sense of independence (soon afterward he left the Atelier), as well as to his relationship with Artaud. Autour d'une Mère was completely Barrault's own creation and thus made Artaud more aware of Barrault's potential talents (see Figure 1). Artaud was so impressed by Autour that he wrote in Le Théâtre et son Double:

[Barrault's] spectacle demonstrated the irresistible expressiveness of gesture; it victoriously proves the importance of gesture and of movement in space. He restores to theatrical

perspective the importance it never should have lost. He fills the stage with emotion and life.²²

Another aspect in which Autour d'une Mère is important to Barrault is the way the production made him acceptable to the revolutionaries by giving him "avant-garde credentials virtually overnight."²³ Thus his first apartment (while at the Atelier, he slept in the basement) soon became a meeting place for surrealist artists and was dubbed "Le Grenier des Augustins." There he found himself surrounded by people such as Jacques Prévert, Robert Desnos, Balthus, and Georges Bataille, with some of whom he would continue to work. None, however, held for Barrault the same attraction as did Artaud.

With Antonin Artaud (and the Surrealists), Barrault learned about many different kinds of theatre, especially the ritualistic-religious theatre that so fascinated Artaud. Thus Barrault "assiduously read the syllabus Artaud assigned him -- Tantrist treatises on Yoga, the Egyptian Book of the Dead, the Upanishads, the Golden Verses and revelled in its sheer esoterism."²⁴ These readings opened up a new world for Barrault, as did Artaud's love of ritual, the influence of which can be found in Barrault's 1955 production of The Orestia, adapted by André Obey. The production was also influenced by occult séances Barrault had witnessed in Africa and Brazil. In Memories for Tomorrow he recalls:

After witnessing these ceremonies ... it is easy to understand why when I re-read my dear old Aeschylus three or four years later, I found in him traces of this magic world. Cassandra's trances, the grief of Electra and Orestes on their father's tomb ... It seems to me that in the twenty-four-century-old shell which covered the Orestia there was a breach through which life was flowing, a new type of life ... which was in constant contact with the mystery of life.²⁵

More evidence of Artaud's influence can be seen in Barrault's own writings. Often he abridges essays found in Artaud's Le Théâtre et son Double. Artaud's essay "An Affective Athleticism," for example, explores the differences in producing texts from different periods, from the point of view of both the audience member and the performer. Obviously, different techniques are used in creating Shakespeare and Pirandello, but in addition the production must be able to create an atmosphere in which the audience can both distance itself and watch the action objectively as well as enter into it and respond subjectively. This essay is similarly reproduced, although differently phrased, in #29 of Cahiers de la Compagnie Madeleine Renaud•Jean-Louis Barrault as "L'Acteur: 'Athlète Affectif'", and in Barrault's Reflections on the Theatre (1951). Also, his theories of the mechanics of the human body and "The Alchemy of the Human Body" came directly from Artaud.

This is not to imply that Barrault stole from Artaud. Indeed, many of the specifics about the breathing apparatus

in "The Alchemy of the Human Body" were worked out together. Tellingly, Barrault refers to these ideas as a "world in which I then began to live and which is still mine."²⁶ As previously mentioned, Barrault had a great depth of understanding of both Artaud's needs and theories. Artaud's Theatre of Cruelty especially touched Barrault, for as both Artaud and Barrault realized, it is an idea often misunderstood:

... 'hollow cruelty' is cheap and easy. To achieve 'tendresse' is the rub. Cruelty is more primitive. It is the first and the only thing by which an impotent manifests himself. I challenge the advocates of the theatre of cruelty to the creation of tenderness ... Just as beatniks imitate Artaud or think they must become alcoholics or [drug addicts] ... He never advocated drug addiction.²⁷

Barrault revered Artaud, and thus it is not surprising to find Artaud's theories and ideas so often in Barrault's writing.

Eric Bentley feels Barrault's true masters to be Charles Dullin, Jacques Copeau, and Etienne Decroux. Interestingly, both Dullin and Decroux had been much influenced by their work with Copeau. As a consequence, Barrault has often been called Copeau's true heir. This becomes especially important when the amount of Copeau theory that exists in Barrault's own work and theory is discovered. The most important of these ideas which influenced Barrault are théâtre d'actualité (Barrault's

term), the notion of eclecticism in creating "total theatre" (again Barrault's words), and the idea of a rotating repertory, a concept which Copeau refined and Barrault was able to make work. Although they only actually worked together for a short time (in 1940, Copeau directed Barrault in Le Cid at the Comédie Française), Copeau's ideas and working methods were very important to Barrault's development. Indirectly, Copeau influenced Barrault through Dullin and Decroux; however, additionally, Copeau's experiment with the Théâtre du Vieux Colombier during the late teens had done much to expand and influence the theatrical climate in which Barrault was working.

Barrault's dedication to the théâtre d'actualité is, for himself, a measure of validity. The term itself refers to the "actuel"; the real, the present, that which actually is. Thus, in Barrault's mind, the théâtre d'actualité is means by which to gauge the realness of a production (does it present situations and characters in a true form, a realistic manner?), and therefore its worth. It does, however, seem to mirror Copeau's desire to create an honest theatre, one that challenged the intelligence and imagination of the audience, the means of the company and the art of theatre while remaining truthful to author and text. For Copeau this meant understanding the art of commedia dell'arte both physically and intellectually before attempting Molière. For Barrault, it meant creating a

production that was valid both for its original audience and today's spectators. As Bentley writes:

False Secrets is an instance ... When Barrault puts the play before us on the stage, he creates the Marivaux world by deportment of his actors, not just by having them wear their costumes rightly or behave in the naughty-elegant way that we associate with period comedy, but by a certain brio, by very adroit adjustments of tempo and tone ... Barrault must have studied Watteau and other painters who show us what the posture and the nature of the old Italian comedians were.²⁸

Three elements, then: acting style, for both classical and new works; the demands of the author (and text) for reality within theatricality, and the concepts of escapism and imagination are all held accountable through means of time, space, and technique. As Barrault himself states:

The Art of the Theatre, because it is ephemeral like the Present; because theatrical performances, the only satisfactory manifestation of the art of the theatre ... belongs narrowly to legend and disregards history; because the art of the theatre deals essentially with the Present and the Simultaneous; because it grasps, in the interests of its very existence, everything in life that is made up of exchanges, movement and rhythm; because it is the very art of Becoming, or of the passing moment; ... the art of the theatre is essentially an art of Actuality.²⁹

The art of the theatre must at once be spontaneous and real, theatrical and contrived, and through these means present an image that reflects and is true to life. It must be immediate.

Jacques Copeau, like Barrault, was eclectic, taking

inspiration from practitioners in all areas and eras of theatre.³⁰ Perhaps his greatest gift to Barrault was the example he set of taking ideas from all over and synthesizing them into his own personal concept of theatre. Barrault's concept of "total theatre" can be seen as an example of this influence, for it combines ideas and techniques that stem from many different theatrical traditions. Barrault explains total theatre as "the one which makes use of man in his totality; his gestures, pantomimes, dances, breath, cries, articulation, speech, poetry and singing"³¹ -- in essence, a harmonized, synthesized form. That in this definition echoes of Claudel, Decroux, Dullin, and Artaud are heard is further proof of Copeau's eclectic influence. The creation of total theatre has been important to Barrault from the very beginning of his career. His first production, Autour d'une Mère (1935), used all the above elements in an attempt to create a whole image. Unfortunately, creating total theatre did not prove simple. In 1959 Barrault noted:

The day when there will no longer be an urge to talk about total drama by contrast with a form of drama which falls short of it, on that day the real tradition drama will at last have been rediscovered.³²

Unfortunately, audience members and critics had tried to make Barrault's concept and definition of total theatre into a formula, but as Barrault discovered with Autour d'une

Mère, "The art of theatre is the art of life, and life is the contrary of rigidity and fixity; it is on the contrary something moving, complex and varied, and it can't be enclosed in any formula."³³ For Barrault, the application of a single formula to texts of many different styles and eras was the fastest and most efficient way to create stagnant theatre.

Barrault's 1953 production of Claudel's Christophe Colomb is Barrault's most famous attempt to create total theatre. Essentially Christophe Colomb is a chronicle of Columbus and his discoveries, but as Bettina Knapp notes, "as with all Claudelian drama, it has a didactic edge ... It lives and breathes Catholicism."³⁴ The production begins with a group of actors (though Barrault makes a point of calling them men and women, for here they have not yet become actors) who enter while singing and decide "for the fun of it" to re-enact the life of Christopher Columbus. Costumes are improvised, created from what the actors are already wearing, and from bits and pieces strewn about the stage. Actors take the place of set pieces and props; that is, they become the necessary objects, and with the addition of lights and music, the voyage begins. During certain scenes, film clips are projected onto a large sail which serves both as a screen and as part of the set. These clips, which create a background and a kind of backdrop for the action onstage, are used to show the perpetual existence

and motion of the sea, for example, or to give the sensation of filling the stage and theatre with flying doves. This technique, à la Erwin Piscator, rather than detracting from the creation of total theatre, succeeds in enhancing it. Barrault, who loved the idea, says:

It [the film] can show actions which are simultaneous. Every action, like a coin, has two faces -- one visible, the other invisible. Life also has two faces -- the apparent and the secret one, the external and the internal, the physical and the metaphysical, the natural and the supernatural, etc. In life we comprehend two aspects simultaneously. Filming joined with drama can enable us to see these two aspects at the same time. Man's behaviour only shows what it wants to show, but if it were possible to see inside him or through him, we could still see what he is trying to hide.³⁵

Thus the film clips, which although not in the original text were conceived by Claudel, resulted in the creation of a fuller picture. The film clips became part of the action, thus creating a double and triple focus. (The set onstage, the actors, and the film clips.) In this way the production succeeded "in serving the theatre in its totality," and, as Barrault continues, "at this moment total theatre finds its unity."³⁶ Because "theatre is man," and because man has created this series of images as a man, rather than as an actor (remember, Barrault sees the performers as people acting, rather than actors performing), here man has expressed himself completely, both as man and as actor; he has created complete theatre. "With the totality of his

means of expression," says Barrault, "there will be theatre, and, if one wishes, total theatre ..."37

Another aspect of Copeau's influence can be seen in the creation of the Compagnie Madeleine Renaud-Jean-Louis Barrault in 1947. (Madeleine Renaud, his wife since 1939, was both a stage and film actress, and has always been involved with Barrault's projects. She was co-director and co-founder of the company, although she never directed.) Barrault had dreamed of forming a company since 1939, "I intended to be, someday, responsible for a group of human beings. This was my will, my aim, my voyage, my passage: the destiny I had marked out for myself."38 His aim was:

To create a theatre and run it prosperously in the same way one creates and tries to run 'a model farm' -- the elders supply the grafts, the adults the bulk of the crops, the younger ones the seeds for new crops. A company can only be good if it has three generations of actors and actresses, and we all loved good acting, professional efficiency, and the cult of beauty."39

Copeau had attempted to create an independent repertory company in both 1913 and 1917, but had not been able to make it successful for any length of time. Barrault's attempt, however, was successful and much of the basis for this experiment comes directly from Copeau. Barrault explains:

We wanted our theatre to be alive, and a theatre can only be so if it is run on a repertory basis, that in turn can only be done by producing new plays. In order to do that one has to be able to present many plays at the same time, on a rotation

basis ... The alternation rhythm maintains vitality. The good actor who knows that he might play a great part one day, and a small one the next day, consents to play any part ... Playing many and very different parts at short intervals enables the actors to widen their range and to discipline their talent ... In order to be daring, and to contribute to the life of the theatre, one must have the right to make mistakes. The repertory system, together with a public which follows closely the efforts of a theatre, makes that possible and takes them in its stride.⁴⁰

Much of this is the rationale Copeau used in setting up the Théâtre du Vieux Colombier.

Like Copeau, Barrault also saw the benefits of producing new works, as well as revivals of classics. Barrault notes; "The primary function of a classical repertory is to provide nourishment."⁴¹ Copeau, during his 1913-14 and 1917-19 seasons, produced forty-nine plays by forty-three different authors, including Molière, Claudel, Dumas-fils and Georges Clémenceau,⁴² whereas Barrault, during his thirteen seasons with the Compagnie Renaud-Barrault presented fifty-four. Thirteen were classical works, thirty-seven modern (twenty of which were new productions), three pantomimes and one variety show, including authors such as Aeschylus, Lope de Vega, Feydeau, Claudel, Camus, Salacrou, and Chekov. "Out of these fifty-four plays, fourteen [were a] great success; they had more than 100 performances, and we made money on them ... [and] five were flops."⁴³ Comparatively, it seems that Copeau was the more prolific, but it must be noted that Barrault and

his company toured from two to five months of each year.

The mark Copeau made on Jean-Louis Barrault is evident. "He taught us everything. Not an author or actor that is not heir to his labors, who is not his debtor,"⁴⁴ says Barrault of Copeau's work, and indeed many of the new generation of theatre practitioners took their lead from Copeau's Vieux Colombier. His attention to all theatrical elements in an attempt to create a unified, honest, total synthesis paved the way for further experimentation and in addition gave to his heirs new means through which to succeed.

Both Charles Dullin and Etienne Decroux, Barrault's earliest teachers, also had a great impact on the man and his work. In Dullin, as in Claudel, Barrault found a father figure, important because his own father died when he was young (he keenly felt the loss); but also Dullin "opened me up, formed my taste, and it was from this moment that I felt in need of a choice."⁴⁵ The time Barrault spent with Dullin at the Atelier (1931-35) was his first experience with creating theatre. Through Dullin, Barrault not only learned about theatre, but also about directing, acting, and the art of helping an actor find within himself the necessary sensations for each specific role.

Teaching and thus learning was a most important element of Dullin's method. Through improvisations, "He was teaching us authenticity in our sensations: to feel before

expressing,"⁴⁶ and through 'gymnastics,' Barrault gained a sense of the human body. Fondly Barrault remembers his time at the Atelier, in Memories for Tomorrow, recalling: "Among other riches Dullin possessed the rarest of them all: a daily virginity. Every morning he seemed to have forgotten everything and be feeling life for the first time. This is the most precious lesson I have retained."⁴⁷ Barrault perceives this freshness to be a great gift; it is an idea often found in his writings, from the earliest to most recent, but especially in Je Suis Homme de Théâtre (1955).

Although Barrault learned about the physique of the human body from Dullin, it was through working with Etienne Decroux, also a member of the school/company at the Théâtre de l'Atelier, that he really began to understand its potential. Together they worked their bodies, and Barrault not only discovered mime and pantomime, but also his own gift of movement; he was able to control his body and create a myriad of different poses (see Figure 2). Barrault and Decroux found the opportunity to work together while both under the care of Dullin at the Atelier, and together they explored the limits of their bodies with respect to movement. Barrault explains:

We began to codify a new sol-fa of the art of gesture. We established the difference between wordless pantomime and silent mime. It was an inspired, mad period. We had become nudists and vegetarians. Nudists by a religious respect for muscles. Vegetarians, I have to say, rather by

necessity. We drugged ourselves chiefly with our bodies: searching for ways of keeping balance, of slow motion, contraction-decontraction-relaxation, push-pull: the whole gamut.⁴⁸

Ultimately, however, Decroux and Barrault were destined to go their separate ways, for Barrault advocated "The art of the Gesture -- it is a pure and genuine sapling of the tree that is dramatic art,"⁴⁹ whereas Decroux preferred the ancient art of pantomime, an art he found to be a purer form. Decroux says:

When two arts are active together, the one must retreat when the other advances, and vice versa ...

The actor should abstain from all gesture when he speaks rich verses. Conversely, a considerable pantomimic activity may happily accompany words, their words.

But instead of its being a man accompanying words with gestures, it will be a man accompanying his gestures with words ... and hence thin ones.⁵⁰

This, then, is the basis for the fundamental disagreement between Barrault and Decroux. Barrault, although capable of creating what Decroux saw as "true mime" ("Baptiste," in Les Enfants du Paradis [1943] for example) felt that language and gesture complemented each other, rather than detracting. For Barrault, gesture and Geste Contemporain became a means of illuminating the spoken word, and language (the complement) aided in clarifying the gestures.

Decroux, who believed in keeping all art forms separate, saw mime more in terms of dance, but without

music. Thus it was the movements themselves which conveyed the emotion, and by putting them into the conventional framework of language, both the original intention and the purity of the form were destroyed. In spite of Barrault and Decroux's separation after four years of working together, their working relationship remained strong and over the following ten years they occasionally worked together. Their most famous collaboration was on the mime sequences for the film Les Enfants du Paradis (1943), but here Barrault was creating a pure mime character à la Decroux, rather than utilizing the synthesis of language and gesture he preferred in his own work (see Figure 3). However, because of his work with Decroux, Barrault realized the importance of gesture and mime both personally -- for he had a great gift -- and for all actors. The use of movement in order to illuminate the text became very important to both his acting and directing styles. In The Trial (1946), adapted from the Kafka novel by Barrault and André Gide, for example, Barrault both acted the principal role and directed. Of his direction and his performance in The Trial, Eric Bentley noted in In Search of Theatre:

The 'Chaplinism' of the performance is a possible plastic equivalent of Kafka's conception of Joseph K. Barrault continually uses his body as a sort of tool or machine. When pushed, on one occasion, it falls in a straight line, like a post ... Barrault invents a chorus of Jews, which move as a corps de ballet and by its ordered movements of disorder expresses Joseph K.'s bewilderment and

ours.⁵¹

The question remains, however, whether Barrault would have realized the full potential of the actor's instrument, the body, without Etienne Decroux.

Barrault's Theories:

The ideas and the impact of Dullin, Copeau, Decroux and Artaud are an important part of what Barrault became and the kind of theatre he would stand for. Because of their profound influence, the ideas they stimulated are indeed central to Barrault's theories. But as one for whom education and experimentation are especially important, the theories he generated independently show much about who he became, in essence because of his teachers' influence. These ideas are most important, for Barrault perceives them to be great truths. He devoted much time to exploring them completely, in an effort to gain a greater understanding of their importance, not only for himself but in terms of theatre generally.

In Saisir Le Présent (1984), Barrault says that silence is the "Rampe de lancement de toute création; source de toute musique."⁵² This idea, that theatre is created when silence vibrates, he discovered in late 1931 while sleeping onstage in an empty theatre, in Volpone's bed. It has fascinated him ever since:

... the whole art of the theatre is to make that Silence vibrate. To unfreeze that Silence. To go against the current. When a river flows into the sea it dies; it flows right away into the communion of Saints, its estuary is its sickness ... so it is important to go against the current so as to get to the source, the birth, the essence. Art ... the challenge to death ... that unique Silence which alone can give us the physical sensation of the Present. The physical sensation of the Present filled me with a progression of silence that was to make its mark on me forever.⁵³

Thus, true theatre has been achieved when silence vibrates, which seems to occur "among thousands of people, a thousand listening human hearts, open, 'sharing,' sharing the present moment with me."⁵⁴

Autour d'une Mère (1935) is a good example of this abstract concept brought to life. Although it is Barrault's earliest creation, this idea of silence vibrating was foremost in his mind. Because the concept was still crude, its subtleties are less difficult to discern. The plot follows the death of a mother and her reactions, as well as those of her four sons. The mother is the only character who speaks, and then only after she is dead. It is essentially a mime piece, but here Barrault is also exploring the theatricality of silence, a concept he will later attempt to re-create and find in all of his projects. Of Autour d'une Mère, Barrault says:

The dramatic action took two hours to play, with about thirty minutes of text. It was a case, therefore, of starting from Silence and living in

the Present. The characters are there, they are living at this moment. They don't speak to each other. They act. But they are not dumb. Silence is not deafness. Every sound takes on an importance of its own. No one has separated sound from image. It is 'speaking' theatre in which the people say nothing.⁵⁵

Here, then, Barrault was exploring how to create a living, moving, vibrating silence. He was also exploring the knowledge he gained with Decroux, who was, however, extremely displeased with the result. Decroux felt that Barrault had bastardized to an unforgivable extent the purity of the art form by combining word and gesture, and making them dependent upon each other. From the experience of Autour d'une Mère, however, Barrault was able to reaffirm his belief that silence is a valid means through which to express and create theatre. The silent emotions and actions were strong, the spoken words all the more powerful because of the contrast. As Artaud says:

In the animated gesticulations and discontinuous unfolding of images there is a kind of direct physical appeal, something as convincing as solace itself, and which will never release.⁵⁶

Barrault never stopped thinking about and refining; he continued to explore and redefine this concept, as he was able to put more practice and experimentation behind his theory.

Another idea that has been important to Barrault's work is his conception of audience/performer relationships, for

they have helped to create his vision of theatre. Barrault is an advocate of the idea 'instruct and entertain,' and he has always desired and endeavored to please his audience. He must have succeeded, for his audience, once won, has remained very faithful. For Barrault, theatre is made up of giving and receiving, and these acts when experienced simultaneously result in an act of communication so complete as to become a holy act of love: a communion. It is this give-and-take between the spectators (both individually and collectively) and the actors that creates "a collective mingling, an act of true love, a sensual communion of two groups. One opens itself, the other touches and penetrates. The two become one."⁵⁷

But it is not just the audience that receives, nor the players who give. The spectators, by merely accepting the theatrical event as real within a specific world, accept the emotion and are moved by it, in the form of laughter or tears, for example. This acceptance creates a bond and thus a communication between players and spectators, resulting in a communion. Interestingly, Barrault finds this communion to be at its peak among players and spectators who have no common language. What all spectators are looking for, he feels, is the restoration of balance to their lives. This is accomplished by giving them the opportunity to live out their fantasies, in the form of both dreams and nightmares. Thus Barrault was concerned with creating productions which

allowed the spectator to be moved not only by the performance, but by the inherent emotion as well.

It is for this reason that Barrault's productions of Claudel's works were so well received; Claudel's texts allowed for a dual level of consciousness: the theatricality of the production and the real emotion in the text. Partage de Midi (1948) is a good example. As Claudel notes, "The play is about an ordeal from which I suffered so intensely in my youth that its effects have been with me all my life. Even now the wound still hurts."⁵⁸ The raw emotionality of Claudel's original experience is translated to the audience by means of the text, but does not in any way obliterate the theatrical recreation of the experience. Thus the experience is viewed as real within the confines of non-reality: theatricality.

Un Homme de Théâtre

Jean-Louis Barrault defines a man of the theatre as:

quelqu'un qui par amour pour quelques mètres carrés de plancher accepte avec le même amour, de se soumettre à tous les corps de métiers, même à toutes corvées qui se greffent autour.⁵⁹

By the above definition Barrault is an homme de théâtre, for his love expands to every aspect which the theatre encompasses. His work has always been sincere, honest: the result of his openness to experience of all kinds.

Au reste, ce qui est bon pour le travail, c'est d'être de toutes impressions que l'on a reçues de la vie, de la vie, reçue en vrac, l'âme bien ouverte ... Tout est bon pour le travail si l'on sait s'ouvrir à tout.⁶⁰

Taking his lead from Dullin, Barrault also attempted to view every scene, every new addition to the set or a costume, in effect all of his life, as if it were for the first time, as if the image were fresh and a new discovery. By 1959, when he and his company were offered the Odéon-Théâtre de France, he had a good reputation both as actor and director, a dedicated audience, and was both known in Paris and internationally. "That Barrault became for a moment the darling of a movement [avant-garde] was in relation to his career as actor and director -- an accident,"⁶¹ as Eric Bentley put it in 1950, and indeed Barrault ultimately came to stand for theatre "in all its chaos," rather than any particular genre. Instead of getting caught in the ideology of a specific movement, throughout his career Barrault has always desired to please people, and give them an experience to enjoy. The success of his company he attributes to its "mobility - 'we are strolling players' - and then to an ideal ... which allows for changes of theatre and costumes, but never of direction - ... 'Our company has changed its name, but not its aim.'"⁶² Barrault feels the changes of locale to be part of his destiny, just as he was destined to run a company and work in the theatre. The necessities of

changing theatres and names, instead of daunting Barrault, have, on the other hand, allowed him to understand the art and its creation better. In theatre, he sees the essential elements -- the love and the sharing -- more clearly.

Acting Style:

As an actor, Barrault is often compared to Charlie Chaplin, for like all actors of this calibre he does not just use his body, but rather expresses mood, emotion, and character with it. Eric Bentley, who found Barrault's style admirable, says he "acts with his body, with all of his body, limbs and torso. And of course with his face too-- which means that the element of mind comes in ... What Barrault has done is to give back to this soul its earthy covering, its body."⁶³ Thus he is able to create a total image, a total character in each role created, and he has created a great many, such as "Hamlet" (1953), "Baptiste" in Les Enfants du Paradis (1943), "Bérenger" in Le Rhinocéros (1960), "Rodrigue" in Le Cid (1940), and "Scapin" in Les Fourberies de Scapin (1963). His focus, no doubt due to his training in movement, is precise, each need is illustrated through stillness and silence. Barrault's voice, as Bentley notes with respect to Hamlet (1953), may lack a bit in strength, but certainly makes up for it in expressiveness. The actor is the instrument of the theatre, the text is the music, and the sets, lights, and costumes are the rhythm.

This instrument must be finely tuned, and specialized, and able to obey the messages sent. The body must be able to reflect the soul of a character. In every good actor there is a robot, says Barrault, and there are moments he must create, there are moments he must follow. The body holds the power to give life to a character, it must be able to create whatever is necessary to complete the internal with the external. These elements give insight into both the theory and method of Jean-Louis Barrault as an actor. He says:

The actor may have all the psychology you wish and all the spirituality, but it will be best if he start from his body, his primary instrument; and his body moves by physical laws, according to a sort of engineering.⁶⁴

This idea, while it describes Barrault, is also important because it describes Barrault's method, as well, which at this point become the same thing.

By the end of the 1950's, then, after almost thirty years in the theatre, Jean-Louis Barrault had gathered a steady following in Paris, and an international reputation. He was director of a company that had been successful since the late forties, had worked with some of the most influential men of twentieth-century theatre and had managed to combine successfully three careers: film actor, stage actor, and stage director. As well, Barrault was able to find time to write several books and also to explore his

theories of theatre without compromising the quality of his productions. Paris looked upon him as a solid fixture in the theatre, and still his enthusiasm had not waned. In Barrault's words: "if the time comes when we [Madeleine Renaud, his wife, and he] feel we have no more to do, then we quit, change profession."⁶⁵ But ideas such as total theatre and communion between players and spectators were still not fully resolved in Barrault's mind. There was still more to learn and experience. The theatre, for Barrault, was not merely a reflection of life; it was a place where life could be recreated. It is not life, but it can be like life. And like life, it is filled with constant opportunities for learning. Until this point, Barrault had been flooded with information and ideas which he had explored and synthesized into his own concept of theatre. Now it was time for him to start refining the ideas and look at them from a different standpoint. As director of a state-supported theatre he would have this opportunity. Thus, when he was offered the Odéon-Théâtre de France, he accepted, bringing with him his high standards and love of theatre, of all kinds of theatre.

ENDNOTES - Chapter I

¹Jean-Louis Barrault, Memories for Tomorrow, trans. Jonathan Griffin (London: Thames and Hudson, 1974), p. 45.

²As of 1984, Barrault was still working and had published another book, Saisir Le Present (Paris: Editions Robert Laffont, 1984).

³Jean-Pierre Lenoir, "French Theatre under the Fifth Republic," in Theatre Arts, vol. XLIV, no. 12 (December 1960), p. 61-62.

In 1959, as part of Malraux's plan for theatrical reform, three new state-supported theatres were created, along with more provincial centres: Barrault at the Odéon-Théâtre de France, Jean Vilar at the Théâtre Nationale Populaire, Roger Planchon at the Théâtre Nationale de Province. Barrault was the only one to make a success of it.

⁴For a more comprehensive look at Barrault's work since 1931, see Appendix I.

⁵Hovhanness I. Pilikian, "Dialogue with Barrault," in Drama, No. 89 (Summer 1968), p. 51.

⁶Dorothy Knowles, French Drama of the Inter-War Years (London: George G. Harrap and Co., Ltd., 1967), p. 15.

⁷Ibid., p. 13.

⁸Barrault, op. cit., p. 118.

⁹David Bradby, Modern French Drama: 1940-1980 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), p. 2.

¹⁰Ibid., p. 33.

¹¹Ibid., p. 33.

¹²Barrault, op. cit., p. 179.

¹³Phillip Hollard, 20th Century France (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1966), p. 56.

¹⁴Ibid., p. 61.

¹⁵Ibid., p. 70.

¹⁶Ibid., p. 78.

- ¹⁷Ibid., p. 70.
- ¹⁸Pilikian, op. cit., p. 50.
- ¹⁹Barrault, op. cit., p. 168.
- ²⁰Eric Bentley, "Two Evenings Chez Barrault," in In Search of Theatre (New York: Random House, Inc., 1953), p. 202-03.
- ²¹Jean-Louis Barrault, The Theatre of Jean-Louis Barrault, trans. Joseph Chiari (New York: Hill and Wang, 1961), p. 190-91.
- ²²Antonin Artaud, "Two Notes," in The Theatre and Its Double, trans. Mary Caroline Richards (New York: Grove Press, Inc., 1958), p. 145.
- ²³Frederick Brown, "A thirties Harlequinade: Artaud and Jean-Louis Barrault," in Yale Theatre (October 1974), p. 60.
- ²⁴Ibid., p. 63.
- ²⁵Barrault, The Theatre of Jean-Louis Barrault, p. 69.
- ²⁶Barrault, Memories for Tomorrow, p. 83.
- ²⁷Pilikian, op. cit., p. 53.
- ²⁸Bentley, "God's Plenty in Paris," p. 53.
- ²⁹Jean-Louis Barrault, "The Theatre: The Art of Actuality," in Reflections on the Theatre, trans. Barbara Wall (London: Spottiswoode Ballantyne and Company, Ltd., 1951), p. 130.
- ³⁰People such as Molière, Stanislavsky, S. Appia, E.G. Craig, Granville Barker and A. Antoine were of great importance to Copeau.
- ³¹Barrault cited in Henry Hewes, "Total Theatre," The Saturday Review, XL (January 26, 1957), p. 22.
- ³²Barrault, The Theatre of Jean-Louis Barrault, p. 230.
- ³³Ibid., p. 223.
- ³⁴Bettina Knapp, "Paul Claudel's The Diary of Christopher Columbus: A Demiurge Journeys Forth" in Theatre Journal, vol. 33, no. 2 (May 1981), p. 145.

³⁵Barrault, The Theatre of Jean-Louis Barrault, p. 227-28.

³⁶Jean-Louis Barrault, "'Total Theatre' and Christopher Columbus," in Theatre Quarterly, vol. III, no. 10 (April-June 1973), p. 4.

³⁷Ibid.

³⁸Barrault, Memories for Tomorrow, p. 88.

³⁹Barrault, The Theatre of Jean-Louis Barrault, p. 10-11.

⁴⁰Ibid., p. 11.

⁴¹Barrault, "Within the Event," in Reflections on the Theatre, p. 168.

⁴²Albert M. Katz, "Copeau as Regisseur: An Analysis" in Educational Theatre Journal, vol. 25 (May 1973), p. 161.

⁴³Barrault, The Theatre of Jean-Louis Barrault, p. 15.

⁴⁴Jean-Louis Barrault cited in Eric Bentley, "Copeau and the Chimera" in Theatre Arts Magazine, vol. 34 (January 1950), p. 51.

⁴⁵Jean-Louis Barrault, "The Theatre and its Instrument," trans. Eric Bentley, in The Kenyon Review, vol. XII, 1950, p. 219.

⁴⁶Barrault, Memories for Tomorrow, p. 55.

⁴⁷Ibid., p. 56.

⁴⁸Ibid., p. 57.

⁴⁹Jean-Louis Barrault, "Dramatic Art and the Mime," in Mimes on Miming, Bari Rolfe, ed. (London: Millington Books, 1981), p. 110.

⁵⁰Etienne Decroux cited in Eric Bentley, "The Purism of Etienne Decroux," in In Search of Theatre, p. 174.

⁵¹Eric Bentley, "Two Evenings Chez Barrault," p. 188.

⁵²Jean-Louis Barrault, Saisir Le Present (Paris: Editions Robert Laffont, 1984), p. 34.

⁵³Barrault, Reflections on the Theatre, p. 16.

⁵⁴Ibid.

⁵⁵Barrault, Memories for Tomorrow, p. 67.

⁵⁶Artaud, p. 145.

⁵⁷Jean-Louis Barrault, "Best and Worst of Professions," trans. Manolo Santos and John Hodgson, in The Uses of Drama, ed. John Hodgson (London: Eyre Methuen Ltd., 1972), p. 30.

⁵⁸Barrault, Memories for Tomorrow, p. 181.

⁵⁹Jean-Louis Barrault, Je Suis Homme de Théâtre. (Paris: Editions du Conquistador, 1955), p. 19 - 20.

⁶⁰Ibid., p. 31.

⁶¹Bentley, "Two Evenings Chez Barrault," p. 202.

⁶²Eric Shorter, "Two's Company at Orsay," in Drama (Autumn 1977), p. 22.

⁶³Bentley, "God's Plenty in Paris," p. 52.

⁶⁴Bentley, "Two Evenings Chez Barrault," p. 188.

⁶⁵Pilikian, op. cit., p. 51.

Figure 1

"Autour d'une Mère"

From: André Frank, Jean Louis Barrault (Paris: Editions Seghers, 1971), p. 32.

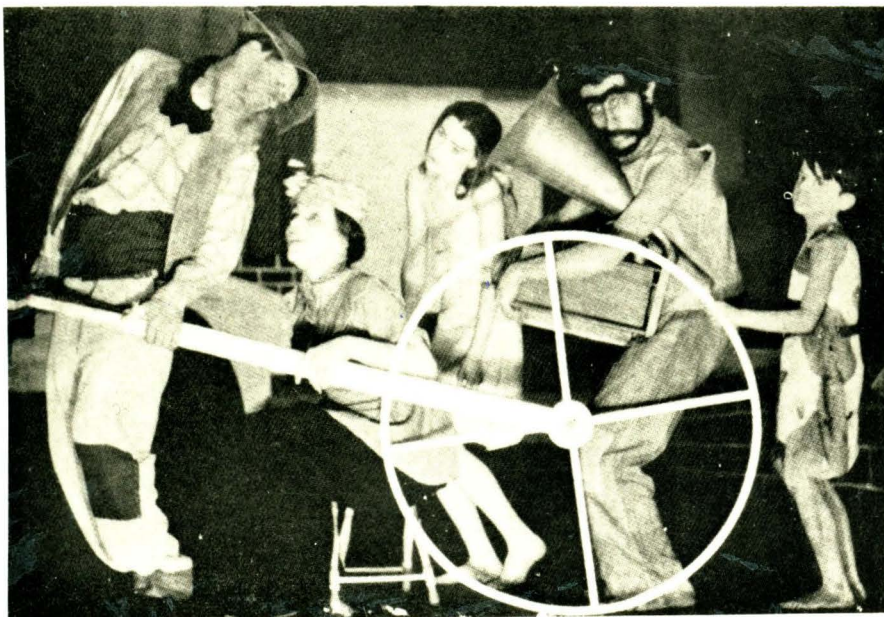


Figure 2

"Training in Mime"

From: Jean-Louis Barrault, Memories for Tomorrow, trans. Jonathan Griffen (London: Thames and Hudson, 1974), p. 128, #12.



Figure 3

"Les Enfants du Paradis": Barrault as "Baptiste"
From Barrault, Memories for Tomorrow, p. 128, #17.



CHAPTER II

"The Odéon-Théâtre de France: 1959-1968"

Creation of the Odéon-Théâtre de France

In 1959, when André Malraux, cultural minister to Charles de Gaulle, appointed Jean-Louis Barrault director of the newly created, state-subsidized Théâtre de France, Barrault had been working in the theatre for twenty-eight years. His company, La Compagnie Renaud-Barrault, had been successful as an independent, self-sustaining repertory group since its creation in 1947; thirty of the more than fifty plays in the company's repertoire were still performed. Barrault's reputation both as an actor and director was firmly established in Paris, as well as internationally. In addition, La Compagnie Renaud-Barrault had just enjoyed a great success at the theatre festival in Bordeaux.¹ Unfortunately, since 1957 the company had had no permanent home, and therefore was forced to limit the number of new Paris productions and spend more time on the road. So when Malraux not only offered Barrault the opportunity to run a state-supported theatre, but also a permanent home for his company, Barrault saw no reason to refuse. Malraux's offer was especially tantalizing since Barrault would not have to yield control over choosing the repertoire. On this subject Barrault says: "During nine years of the Théâtre de France, he [Malraux] never tried to subject me to influence or constraint."² Barrault was being offered not only a prominent and enviable post, but state support, and a home, for his company.

The Malraux Reforms

Barrault's appointment as director of the Odéon-Théâtre de France was part of the cultural reforms initiated by Malraux in 1959. These amendments were fashioned in an attempt to boost French culture by creating more theatre of potentially national value in either a historical or contemporary context. Productions of national value were those which, on the whole, reflected favorably on France and on French culture. Thus, productions of French dramatists, or drama which depicted French values and morals, in essence pro-French works, were generally thought to be of national value, especially if professionally produced. Jean-Pierre Lenoir notes:

Since the advent to power of General de Gaulle and the launching of his politique de grandeur, French cultural progress has become one of the country's most effective morale boosters, both at home and abroad. The importance that the President of the Fifth Republic attaches to the cultural prosperity of France is shown by the speed with which he created a high level administrative post, Minister of State for Cultural Affairs, and his nomination of no less a figure than André Malraux to take control.³

At this early stage, Malraux's plans for cultural reform in France, dubbed the "Malraux Plan," were aimed primarily at reforming France's oldest national theatre: the Comédie Française. But they would also "make available 'the highest works of humanity,' and first of all those of France, to the

greatest number possible of Frenchmen."⁴ Thus Barrault was given the Salle Luxembourg, which since its creation in 1780 had belonged to the Comédie Française. Also as part of Malraux's reforms, Jean Vilar (director of the Théâtre Nationale Populaire since 1952) received, in addition to the 2,700 seats at the Palais Chaillot (home of the T.N.P.), a small "théâtre d'essai" of one hundred seats. Albert Camus was honoured with a theatre of his own, and new administrators for the Opéra Comique and the Opéra (A.M. Julien, creator of the Théâtre des Nations in 1955) and the Comédie Française (Claude de Boisanger) were assigned.⁵

Malraux's desire to "clean the luminous stones of Paris"⁶ stemmed from his dissatisfaction with the way in which the Comédie Française was being run, the fare that it offered, and the place it held in French theatre. Lenoir says:

It was said that the Comédie Française was being weighed down by an archaic system of administration, and its decline was being hastened by the manoeuvres of a certain clique among its members ... The Malraux Plan was drafted primarily to combat a creeping paralysis in this centre of the French theatrical tradition.⁷

Malraux saw the Comédie Française, "la maison de Molière," being destroyed by actors who were concerned with producing works that included roles they wished to perform, rather than the more traditional and historical theatre the Comédie had become known for. Not enough attention was being paid

to the role the Comédie Française had traditionally played in the French theatre world, nor the kind of theatre the Comédie needed to produce if it were to retain its status as France's foremost national theatre. Works by great French dramatists such as Corneille, Racine, and Hugo tended to be ignored in favor of newer, less traditional works, such as Montherlant's Port Royal (1954), and Adamov's Paolo Paoli (1956). This problem was not unique to the Comédie; the number of French classics being produced anywhere in France during the latter part of the 1950's was small. As J.P. Lenoir notes:

Parallelling his administrative reforms, Malraux is attempting to encourage, at the Comédie Française, as elsewhere, a revival of classical tragedy, and to increase the proportion of the repertory devoted to such authors.⁸

By putting the Comédie Française under new direction, and creating additional state-supported (National) theatres, opportunities for creating theatre of national value increased. As well, by changing the structure of the Comédie, and giving different directors (Vilar and Barrault, for example) more chance to experiment, Malraux hoped to open up French culture, and make it more accessible, both in terms of availability and acceptability. Unfortunately, from the standpoint of the artist this attitude helped to create only stagnant theatre and art. David Bradby says:

Far from encouraging their audiences to question the status quo, they had become museum guards of a showcase for French cultural prestige. And the harder they struggled to assert their artistic independence, the more lavish praise was heaped on them and the more completely they were absorbed by Malraux's cultural imperialism. They felt that they had been cheated, that instead of achieving an effective protest, they had become sugar on the pill of the modern capitalist state, the 'supplément d'âme,' or dash of soul designed to make the rest acceptable.⁹

However, in spite of the problems, the changes Malraux initiated in the late fifties brought authors such as Ionesco, Beckett, and Genet more sharply to the attention of the French.

French Classification of Theatres

Furthermore, the "Malraux Plan" aided in the decentralization of French theatre from Paris to the provinces. Malraux's plans to create a new atmosphere for theatre in France fueled creative energy all through the provinces. Out of this renewed zeal came the need for both more amateur and professional companies. Thus Centres Dramatiques and Maisons de la Culture (both of which were state-funded) were created, augmenting the opportunities for the French to both attend and create theatre. There were now six officially recognized classifications of theatre in France:

- 1) The Maisons de la Culture, which import plays from both Paris and the provinces at high cost.

- 2) The Centres Dramatiques Nationaux, which are funded by both state and local governments. Many of these have permanent companies.
- 3) The Théâtres Municipaux, which are local theatres and import touring productions without any particular program in mind.
- 4) The Théâtres et Compagnies Dramatiques, which are funded only by local bodies.
- 5) The Théâtres Nationaux, which are few in number and are funded by the state.
- 6) The private theatres, most of which operate as do Broadway or West End Theatres.¹⁰

Barrault's newly-created Odéon-Théâtre de France was organized as a national theatre. Thus he received an annual subsidy of \$275,000, which was skimmed from the budget of the Comédie Française. Barrault signed two six-year contracts, the first in 1959, the other 1965. The second contract was dissolved in 1968, due to events that occurred during the May Revolution (see Chapter III).

Unfortunately, this \$275,000 was not the fortune it appeared to be once the Odéon's problems became clear. In Memories for Tomorrow, Barrault recalls:

The Odéon is expensive to run, our subsidy, which was settled in a hurry and without any point of comparison, turned out to be insufficient, and according to the licensee's contract which I signed, my liability was unlimited. I agreed to this contract nonetheless, for the heavy and dangerous financial responsibility which it involved safeguarded my artistic freedom ... On the material plane, it was nothing but constant difficulties, and nearly brought us to ruin ...

The general belief is that being subsidized, we had a comfortable life. The opposite is true. Whereas at the Marigny [home of the Compagnie Renaud-Barrault from 1947-1957] we broke even with average attendances of 60 per cent, during nine years at the Théâtre de France our break-even was as high as 72 per cent, and we did not attain it.¹¹

Nevertheless, Barrault was able to make the Odéon-Théâtre de France a success, and gain immense satisfaction from the guarding of his artistic integrity. The Odéon was his theatre, in spite of the state funding: the stage with which to create his vision of theatre.

The Odéon-Théâtre de France: Goals

Barrault's goals for this state-supported venture were simple. In his memoirs, he states: "Its [the Odéon's] object ... seemed clearly defined: promotion, creation, youthfulness, a theatre whose plays should be at the starting point of artistic activity."¹² Thus Barrault set about to produce theatre of which France could be proud, creating productions from texts written by the best French dramatists, both past and present, and further exploring techniques and theories, some of which had fascinated him since he first met Dullin in 1931. Moreover, Barrault invited some of France's finest theatre artists to create productions of their own at the Odéon, such as: Roger Blin (En Attendant Godot [1961]), Divines Paroles [1963], Oh! Les Beaux Jours [1963], Les Paravents [1966]), Marguerite Jamois

(The Merchant of Venice [1961]), and J.P. Granval (Le Double Inconstant [1963], Le Barbier de Seville [1966]). He also acted in and directed a great number of pieces himself during his years as director of the Théâtre de France.

Playing Spaces

Also as part of his goal to make the Odéon a "starting-point of artistic activity," Barrault created for himself and his company two additional, more intimate playing spaces, to augment the main auditorium. (For a diagram of the Odéon in 1987, see Figure 4.) The first of these was called the "Petite Salle" and was created within the main playing space of the Odéon-Théâtre de France. Barrault recalls:

By means of a muslin canopy we found a way of altering the volume of the Odéon auditorium quite quickly. All that was left of it was the stalls and first circle. - Six hundred and fifty seats. A true 'Royal' theatre. Its atmosphere was extraordinary. For certain plays that I call 'easel plays' it was ideal. It was in that format that Beckett's masterpiece Oh! Les Beaux Jours had its first performance.¹³

The Petite Salle was not a permanent space; it was created within the existing structure of the main auditorium, and had to be dismantled before the full auditorium could be used. Thus the "muslin canopy" was capable of changing only the existing space, thereby giving Barrault greater range in staging potential, but unfortunately the two spaces could

not be used concurrently. The Petite Salle had its inauguration in 1963.

The second additional playing space was dubbed the "Petit-Odéon," and was permanent, insofar as it was not necessary to dismantle it in order to use the main auditorium. It seated 112 patrons and was created in the former foyer of the theatre. Of le Petit Odéon, Barrault says:

Certaines oeuvres se perdent sur le grand plateau. On l'a constatée avec L'Hypothèse de Pinget. On peut composer de grandes fresques et aussi avoir besoin de peindre un petit tableau très fouillé ...¹⁴

The Petit-Odéon opened in January, 1967, with two short plays by Nathalie Sarraute, Le Silence and Le Mensonge, both of which were directed by Barrault.

Rotating Repertory

The Odéon-Théâtre de France was run on a system of rotating repertory; that is, four or five different productions ran in repertory (alternation) throughout the entire season. This system, as opposed to running a single show for a number of weeks, had been Barrault's preferred method since 1947, when La Compagnie Madeleine Renaud•Jean-Louis Barrault was born. This system not only gave Barrault the opportunity produce a variety of different works within a short period of time, but gave both himself and his actors

the opportunity to create a number of roles (both large and small) simultaneously. There was also opportunity to work with different authors and styles, and after the creation of the Petite-Salle and the Petit Odéon, opportunity to produce these works in one of three different spaces, all with entirely different atmospheres. As noted in Chapter I, during the period from 1947-1959, Barrault created productions by many different authors. During his nine years at the Odéon he expanded this trend to include Ionesco, Genet, Beckett, Sarraute, Beaumarchais, Shepard, Camus and Feydeau. Many of the productions by these authors were either French or world premieres. These were seen combined in repertory with revivals of productions created during what Barrault calls the "Marigny Period" (1947-1959),¹⁵ the twelve years during which he and his company were based at the Théâtre Marigny in Paris.

Opinion

Over the last ten years both critical and public opinion of Barrault's work had been growing more positive, as was his reputation both in France and internationally. However, once he accepted the post of director of the Odéon-Théâtre de France in 1959, and the appointment became finalized, Barrault had to again prove the existence of his talents and value to le tout Paris. Unfortunately, it is the nature of the French to distrust change of any kind,

even if it promises to be positive. Thus, the French in general, were skeptical of any and all of Malraux's plans to reform the French theatrical tradition, especially those which involved an institution like the Comédie Française. An example of this prevalent and typical attitude is seen in the response Barrault received while paying a visit to the Ministry of Finance. An aide said:

'To tell you the truth, I don't see the reason for your visit. For me you are only a project of Monsieur Malraux's, who is himself only a project of Monsieur de Gaulle.'¹⁶

Thus it seems that Barrault was caught in the crossfire. His work was known and respected, but because he was part of Malraux's reforms, his value and reputation were challenged. Barrault notes:

André Malraux's decision had aroused jealousies, 'righteous indignation' in many quarters: for a very long time we had to struggle against bitter hostility. Just as we had been an object of charitable compassion when we had no theatre [1957-1959], we were now visited with anger for having one.¹⁷

But much of his already dedicated audience did follow Barrault to the Odéon, despite their doubts about the venture itself. The manner in which both the public and critics received his work fluctuated; one production was adored, the next hated, and seldom during his first seasons at the Théâtre de France were patrons and critics able to

agree. In Memories for Tomorrow Barrault recalls:

[Anouilh's La Petite Molière] ... opened on 11 November, 1959 - three weeks after Tête d'or. The same press that had given it a chorus of praise in may now fell upon us. What had become of the time when -- in 1956 -- Paris applauded each new venture of our company? This time André Malraux's Théâtre de France must be brought down in failure.

At last the storm calmed down with Christopher Fry's La Nuit a Sa Clarté ...; Andromaque was a victory; and Ionesco's Le Piéton de l'air divided opinion, but favorably on the whole.

Our plane had taken three seasons to get off the ground. Now we gained height. We were flying towards the fine weather.¹⁸

Thus, although three seasons (1959-60, 1960-61, 1961-62) and twenty-five productions had to pass for Paris to re-accept Barrault, and to once again honour him with accolades as one of France's finest directors, he was able to regain his former stature. If anything he was now treated with even more respect and admiration. Moreover, his direction of the Odéon was, on the whole, a success. Unfortunately, due to the nature of the student revolt in 1968 (see Chapter III), it seems that any box-office receipts and records which would further substantiate this statement have been lost or destroyed.

In 1965 Barrault's original six-year contract was renewed and Malraux continued his policy of non-intervention. The caliber of theatre artists who worked with Barrault and his company at the Odéon was further testimony to his success. Barrault notes:

On the spiritual and artistic plane, the Théâtre de France period of our company was pure and joyous, a time of full bloom. If it had not been so, why did men like Ionesco, Roger Blin, Billetdoux, Beckett and Genet, and women like Marguerite Duras and Nathalie Sarraute, come and join us?¹⁹

In addition, the outrage such theatre people as Felix Labisse, Laurence Olivier, Sir John Gielgud and Harold Hobson -- to name only a few -- felt at Barrault's dismissal in 1968 is indicative of the recognition he had achieved as one of France's finest directors and actors. Thus, despite France's original misgivings about Malraux's reforms and Barrault's installation at the Odéon as one of the plan's key elements, the theatre and the venture were a success. The Théâtre de France was a success in the eyes of the public and the critics, above all because Barrault created good and entertaining theatre. In the eyes of the government, too, the Odéon was successful, for the productions it created were of national value. Finally, the success of the Théâtre de France was a personal triumph for Barrault, who was able to keep his artistic integrity while holding the important post of director of France's newest national theatre.

ENDNOTES - Chapter II

¹Jean-Louis Barrault, Memories for Tomorrow, trans. Jonathan Griffin (London: Thames and Hudson, 1971), p. 266.

²Ibid., p. 267.

³Jean-Pierre Lenoir, "French Theatre Under the Fifth Republic," in Theatre Arts, vol. XLIV, No. 12 (December 1960), p. 61.

⁴"National Culture for France," in Commonweal, Vol. LXX, No. 12 (December, 1960), p. 61.

⁵Lenoir, op. cit., p. 61-62.

⁶Barrault, p. 266.

⁷Lenoir, p. 61.

⁸Ibid., p. 60.

⁹David Bradby, Modern French Drama: 1940-1980 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), p. 1.

¹⁰Colby H. Kullman and William C. Young, Theatre Companies of the World (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1986), p. 260.

¹¹Barrault, op. cit., p. 267.

¹²Ibid., p. 269.

¹³Ibid., p. 289.

¹⁴Jean-Louis Barrault cited in Colette Godard, "Le Laboratoire de Barrault," in Les Nouvelles Littéraires, No. 2055 (19 janvier 1967), p. 13.

¹⁵For a complete list of the productions produced at the Odéon-Théâtre de France from 1959-1968, see Appendix II.

¹⁶Barrault, Memories for Tomorrow, p. 268.

¹⁷Ibid.

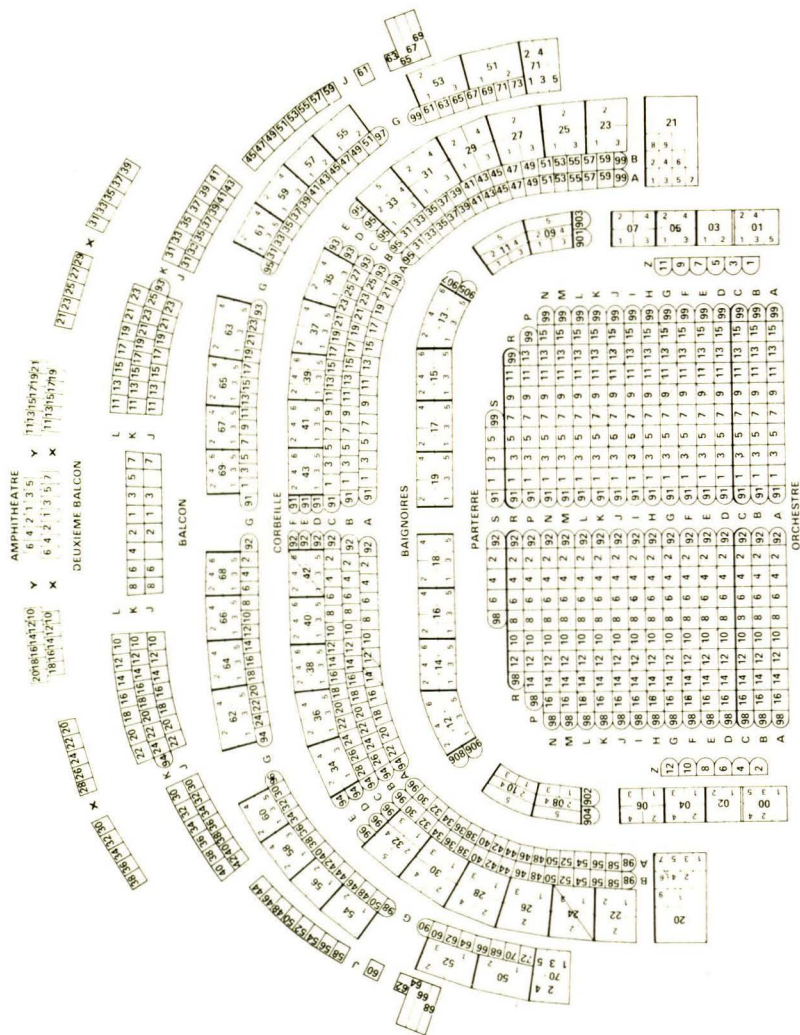
¹⁸Ibid., p. 270-71.

¹⁹Ibid., p. 267.

Figure 4

Plan of Théâtre de l'Odéon: 1987

From: Programme of "Odéon: Théâtre Nationale: Comédie Française, 1987"



CHAPTER III

"The Odéon-Théâtre de France and
the May Revolution: 1968"

Context:

During the 1960's, North American and European societies were hit by a wave of protest and dissatisfaction which caused great change in the roles played by the young adults of these cultures. This wave encompassed everything from the black protests against segregation in the southern United States to protests against the U.S. war effort in Vietnam (which was seen not only in America, where the draft was in effect, but in Europe and Japan as well). Also, the assassination of Martin Luther King in 1968 and demonstrations for freedom of speech in academic institutions were all a part of this wave, which was the result of a collapse of authority seen all over the world. That is, young people, on the verge of taking on what was seen as "adult responsibility," were questioning the validity of the previous generation's standards and values. "We do not want a world in which the guarantee of no longer dying of hunger is exchanged for the risk of dying of boredom."¹ But this was more than just the necessary and normal rejection of parental values and authority. Young people were exploring their priorities, and discovering that a secure existence and dull job were not life's only goals. Rather, they took an interest in both their present and future, and attempted to change those aspects they found unsatisfactory. As well, by means of a more technically advanced medium (television), not only was youth becoming

more aware of the world's problems, but there was also a growing awareness that their rebellions were not unique. Thus a kind of solidarity among all young rebels was established. News of other protests added fuel to their fire and impetus to fight for change in the world around them.

It was in the spring of 1968, in France, that this wave of discontent peaked. Here the youth of French society was not only demonstrating against the war in Vietnam, but against the whole of society, which they saw as still governed by archaic traditions and roles.² The movement, which has come to be known as the May Revolution, started primarily as a student revolt against the university system, which was seen as archaic in its structure and ill-equipped to deal with growing numbers of students. In 1967 Paris alone had 30,000 students too many, the number increasing from 200,000 Parisian students in 1960 to 520,000 by 1967.³ The movement, however, rapidly became a revolt against the establishment, as workers and anarchists joined in the fight and attempted to shake the structure and foundation of French society. Charles Posner, in Reflections on the Revolution in France: 1968, points out: "May not only taught people about how their society functions; it also changed the way in which we ask questions about ourselves and our societies."⁴

In fact, the May Revolution served as the impetus for

strikes and occupations in universities and small businesses all over France, as well as for ten million striking workers at the movement's peak. Theatres were occupied all over France, most notably the state-supported Odéon-Théâtre de France, of which Jean-Louis Barrault was the director. The Odéon played an important role in the May Revolution, for it functioned as a tribune libre for the students and protesters, a forum for discussion and disapprobation. The focus of this chapter will be on the role the Odéon played in the May Events, and the effect of this occupation on the government, on Barrault -- he was ultimately dismissed because of his behavior during the occupation -- and on the protesters who took refuge there. First, however, it is necessary to take a look at what the Movement/Revolution stood for, and what changes the students (and later the workers) were trying to effect.

The May Revolution: Protest

At its base, the French May Revolution was a result of student concerns. Not only were university facilities grossly overcrowded; the way in which the students were being taught and the subjects being taught reflected an archaic ideology. The students wanted better and less expensive student housing, and a more comprehensive system of student aid and scholarship programs. As well, they wanted a more efficient examination process, one in which

the student was required to synthesize the information he learned through a creative thought process, rather than mere regurgitation of lectures. The students also desired more officially-recognized power, on committees such as the student senate, in order to gain more control over the way each individual institution was run.

Essentially, the students wanted both a good place in which to learn and a curriculum they felt was relevant and important to twentieth-century France. This dissatisfaction grew to the proportions it did⁵ because the university system (the structure of which had changed little since the original conception hundreds of years before) was not set up in such a way as to function independently of French culture and society. As often happens, the French educational system directly reflected the values and goals of society. However, here the ideals and standards it reflected were fast becoming outdated. French societal values had undergone vast changes during the fifties and sixties, and the French system of education had been unable to keep up. The gap between the newer standards of values and the educational goals of the French thus grew wider. In order to introduce the changes the students deemed necessary, the entire hierarchy on which the French educational system was based, and therefore all of French society, needed to be restructured. As Posner notes:

The May events heralded profound changes not only in who exerts power, but how power is exerted and for what ends. The institutions of contemporary society, from primary schools to factories, universities, and cultural centres, were forced to take a long hard look at what they were doing and the purposes which governed their activities.⁶

The students found themselves facing an opponent that was too big, for the real problem was the government's inability to understand what the students were protesting against. Alain Touraine, a professor at the Sorbonne during the 1968 Revolution, writes:

The ministers -- unaccustomed to power or responsibility, more concerned about what their master thought than about national realities-- were confused when they discovered the existence of society. They were totally ignorant of the social situation; and since they thought only in international terms, all they could see in the student revolt was the plotting of Maoist groups and the restlessness of middle-class youths letting off steam before settling down, something unpleasant but not really serious.⁷

Thus, in order to make the mark they wanted and to focus the attention necessary, the students were forced to ally themselves with the workers, who were also attempting to effect change within their unions and the government: more reasonable hours, higher wages, more benefits, and so on. By allying themselves with the workforce, the students created a much larger and more easily identifiable group with which to create a real voice. But a true alliance was never really brought about between the two groups. The

workers never adopted the more revolutionary position taken by the students and, according to Touraine, the "students were more inclined toward an idea of social revolution than toward real workers."⁸ However, the two groups did lend mutual support, and together both individual protests gained more strength than they would have had functioning independently. For the students especially, the workers were important. Had the Revolt remained in the university, it would have risked enfeeblement, and found itself running up against professors and administrators, rather than reaching the heart of the matter: the government's inability to understand the changing social atmosphere and the contradictions that now faced French culture.

These contradictions can be seen as tradition versus progress. Since 1959, when de Gaulle came to power, much effort had been focused on bringing France's technological level up to meet the rest of Europe's. Unfortunately, these advances occurred independently of changing French traditional values and customs. The result was a technically advanced society which had little place for traditional values. However, because the technological evolution took place independently of the change in societal values which originally fueled the student revolt, the two areas -- new values and new technology -- often overlapped and clashed. This created a distinct void in the Frenchperson's life, for he was unable to reconcile the two

somewhat opposing views. Lenora Champagne, in French Theatre Experiment Since 1968, comments that

What the enragés sought in May was not political power in the strict sense. Rather they proposed and lived an alternative to the present system. What they sought and took was a new voice. The characteristics of this new voice included a rejection of "proper" bourgeois standards of behavior and a simplicity and directness of expression.⁹

The government, riddled with bourgeois traditions, was incapable of understanding this rejection of the very values they stood for.

Many of the problems that faced French students in 1968 arose from the changing status of the university since the end of World War II. Especially during the fifties and sixties, traditional European (French) values concerning the roles of individual social classes and the way one lived were being exchanged for more typically American orientations. Supermarkets and fast-food restaurants sprang up, and people started to move away from cities, creating extensive satellite suburbs, most notably in Paris. Children were less expected to follow in their parents' footsteps; thus, more children of farmers and labourers were entering a world which had previously been reserved for an elite: the university. This is undoubtedly one of the arenas out of which the original dissatisfaction arose. Young people from lower-class families had to study hard,

and often work as well, in order to be able to live. Often, upon completion of their degrees, these students found themselves entering a world already set in its ways, one to which they could bring little in the way of insight or change. The discrepancies between the dreams and the realities were brought sharply into focus, and disappointment grew into discontent.

Furthermore, the youth of France saw their society as "programmed": technocratic and based on consumer demand. The implication was that happiness could be bought through the possession of goods. Posner notes:

They [the technicians, white collar workers, students, those in arts and communication] could not be satisfied within the framework of the consumer's society. They refused to accept its basic assumption that happiness can be gained by consuming an increasing variety and quality of goods: not only cars and fridges, but books, paintings, objets d'art, cinema and theatre.¹⁰

That the O.R.T.F. (Office de Radiodiffusion et de Télévision Française) had been banned by the government from airing broadcasts about the increasingly violent protests and demonstrations is a further example of what the students called "programmed society." The government had decided to ignore the problems as much as possible in the hope that they would disappear. The O.R.T.F.'s apparent disinterest in the situation was a direct result of this hope. Moreover, the independently-operated Radio Luxemburg was

warned to ignore and not to report upon the demonstrations. Thus, as the students found themselves in the middle of a fight ignored by the very people they hoped to reach, their protests and demonstrations became progressively more desperate and extensive. The police had no choice but to try to control the situation -- but there, too, the violence escalated. Thus universities such as the Sorbonne in Paris and the Université de Nantes were seized by the students in the name of freedom in education, and places of cultural repute, including theatres from all over the provinces, seized in the name of reforming and re-educating the technocratic society.

Action

Barrault's Odéon-Théâtre de France was the first cultural institution to be seized, but fortunately the attention paid to the Odéon defused the need to occupy museums such as the Louvre. Why the Odéon, however, dedicated to new dramatists and increasingly avant-garde values, should be seized while the Comédie Française remained untouched seems to be a paradox, although it is the theatre nearest to the Sorbonne in the Latin Quarter. However, the rationale of those who orchestrated its occupation was straightforward: the Comédie was too steeped in tradition; it was an institution of bourgeois values. The protesters, however, saw the Odéon as propagating

bourgeois ideals, because it was an instrument of the state -- in spite of the new, non-traditional authors produced there. The protesters seized upon this contradiction and held the Odéon up as an example of the attitudes they were fighting: tradition versus progress.

On Wednesday, May 15, 1968, the Odéon-Théâtre de France was taken over by the students, workers, militants, and anarchists of the May Revolution.¹¹ The Occupation started after the end of a performance by the Paul Taylor Dance Company, which was participating in the Théâtre des Nations. As the majority of the patrons filed out, the protesters entered; however, the theatre was already partly filled, for some of the would-be occupiers had been present for the performance. Interestingly, Julian Beck and his Living Theatre, also participants in the Théâtre des Nations, took part in the takeover and occupation of the Odéon, bringing to light still further the contradiction between the kind of theatre presented at the Odéon and those people who could afford to see it. Unfortunately, especially as far as Barrault was concerned, because of the limitations of his subsidy (see Chapter II), ticket prices were still above the means of most students and workers. Thus, unwittingly, the Odéon was in part maintaining the same elitist attitudes the Revolution was fighting. In The Life of the Theatre, Beck recalls:

It was important to occupy the Odéon just because it was le Théâtre de France, where the government gave the Barrault-Renaud Company the chance to do Beckett and Adamov and Ionesco and Genet! Because the students and their comrades were refusing in May, 1968 to grant the government the privilege of flattering both itself and the public into believing that the state maintains reputable avant-garde contra-sistemo art. Any art that the establishment supports it exploits, any art that the establishment supports is already infected. So powerful the germs of corruption. We are fighting a plague. The occupation of the Odéon represented the attempt to occupy one of the mechanisms of co-option.¹²

Beck's words in many ways mirror the ideas and rationale of the protesters who decided to take action against the Odéon. They needed a "young" theatre (the Odéon-Théâtre de France was established in 1959), one that personified the art found in this "société de gadget." In their minds, the Comédie Française was already dead; too filled with the tradition of catering to the bourgeoisie. With the Odéon, they felt, there was a chance of actually making a difference. Patrick Ravignat, who partook in the occupation (and during the planning stages), cites the following as additional reasons for choosing the Odéon:

- 1) L'Odéon est admirablement situé. Il est à deux pas de la Sorbonne. La liaison avec les étudiants sera donc facile. En cas de bagarre, il deviendra un refuge et un centre de secours;
- 2) C'est un théâtre d'état entretenu par le Pouvoir que nous voulons détruire;
- 3) Comme tous les théâtres à l'heure actuelle, il fabrique un art de consommation contre lequel nous devons engager une lutte à mort, car c'est un des

plus dangereux facteurs d'aliénation psychologique à notre époque;

4) Il joue des pièces de "gauche" ou d'avant-garde, ce qui'est doublement pernicieux, car de telles représentations constituent pour le Pouvoir des abcès de fixation extrêmement rassurants, des exutoires fort efficaces: jouer la révolution sur une scène, on la voir jouer, est le meilleure moyen de justifier une attitude non révolutionnaire du public -- dans ce sens, Brecht est aujourd'hui à son insu, le prise des réactionnaires.¹³

So, in essence, the occupation of the Odéon was meant to show what youth thought of technocratic society, and also to re-enforce their protests that society was run by an elite, for an elite.

The Odéon: Function

During the period of the Occupation (15 May-14 June 1968), the Odéon functioned in many different capacities-- all of which were extremely important to the movement as a whole. Primarily, and most importantly, it operated as a tribune libre, a place where anyone could come and voice his/her concerns. Much of the sense of fellowship of the movement came from this occupation, and others like it, such as the Sorbonne and l'Université de Nanterre. In addition, the Odéon was a centre for propaganda and many manifestos were drawn up there. These documents dealt with a variety of ideas seminal to the events of the Revolution. Thus the occupiers drew up manifestos which discussed the success of the Odéon as a tribune libre, the growing number of

supporters, governmental non-action, and what was ultimately to be accomplished, for example. These documents were intended to be informative, and to show the success of the occupation of the ex-theatre in terms of the May Revolution.

As well, the Odéon became home for many: a re-affirmation that the Revolt really was important, and also a centre from which, and around which, many kinds of street theatre emerged. This theatre was both political in nature (designed to make the public more aware of the goals of the Revolution) and experimental and innovative, for productions were designed around the problems of everyday life. Patrick Ranganant recalls:

Parallèlement, des groupes s'organisent au sein du C.A.R. [Comité d'action Révolutionnaire]-Odéon. Au Petit-Odéon et Salle Gémier se réunissent des jeunes comédiens, cinéastes, et photographes. Ils veulent mettre au point une nouvelle forme révolutionnaire de théâtre: le-théâtre-dans-la-rue, qui consiste à improviser, sur les boulevards ou dans les carrefours, des scènes à caractère nettement révolutionnaire, pour attirer le plus grand nombre de gens possible, et amener les spectateurs à participer à cette création spontanée, en improvisant à leur tour. Cette "formule" permit de politiser une formule toute en débouchant sur une véritable expression collective.¹⁴

This kind of sentiment in the theatre, and the changes the enragés wanted to effect in French art and culture, can be seen in the motto, "Everyone must have the right to play. Everyone must have the power to express themselves."¹⁵ Youth felt it was time for their demands and ideas to be

taken seriously. This motto was an essential ideology for the occupiers of the Odéon, for it once again emphasized the need to break down the barriers of the elite.

It is also important to note that although other theatres were occupied (L'Opéra, L'Opéra Comique, and the Théâtre Nationale Populaire, to name but a few), the Odéon remained the most important. It was not only a centre out of which came much creative action and thought, such as the bulleten d'occupation, the tribune libre, and the comité-de-théâtre-dans-la-rue, but also -- as a theatre where new authors were being produced -- its occupation brought more clearly to the attention of the public the kind of elitist, bourgeois attitudes that the entire movement was fighting against.

Unfortunately, the theoretical meaning of the occupation of the Odéon in revolutionary terms and what actually occurred there during the occupation are two different things. As Barrault says, "It was the misfortune of the Odéon to be situated at the centre of the clashes. There were rumours that the students were going to march on the Senate, the Institute, the Louvre, as far as the O.R.T.F."¹⁶ Why these events never came to pass can perhaps be explained in this way. The révolutionnaires, whose sympathies lay neither with the student nor with the worker, but rather were aimed at the total destruction of "the establishment," held and propagated ideologies that tended

to band together only the most radical and alienate the student who was really fighting to effect change. The entire movement was highly organized and came to depend on this organization for strategy. The rationale was that there were too many people visibly disenchanted with society as a whole for the Pouvoir to ignore their demands indefinitely. However, once it became apparent that the government meant to do exactly this, and that the radicals were more concerned with general destruction rather than meaningful change, the focus began to scatter and the movement began to crumble. The true radicals and militants gained power through determination and force: they were far better equipped, both emotionally and in terms of armaments, to deal with a moment of this kind. An article in the New York Times (June 15, 1968) notes:

... Among objects found at the Odéon were two carabines, thirty-two helmets, twenty-four gas masks, seventeen clubs, seventy-nine metal garbage can lids, thirty bicycle chains. Also a bayonet, four hatchets, two hammers, three pistols, twelve tear gas grenades, and twenty-four molotov cocktails.¹⁷

That the structure of the movement did indeed begin to crumble, and the subtle way in which the power was transferred to the radicals, can be seen in the events that occurred within the Odéon during its four-week occupation. This is not meant to imply that the power transfer was complete. On the contrary, many students and workers did

retain their original vision. However, as Barrault writes in Memories for Tomorrow:

On the side of the insurrection I could distinguish the genuine students, who were also beginning to feel disgusted, from the extremist groups, who appeared to me thoroughly organised ... We felt we were being betrayed on all sides, and had no inclination to join up with anything. Only the students, the genuine ones, touched us. They seemed to me quite as much betrayed as we were.¹⁸

But unfortunately the focus of the movement became rather less centered as the occupations, protests, and demonstrations continued.

Much of what actually occurred inside the Odéon seems to have had more to do with the revolutionaries' manipulation of the movement, rather than the original concept. Patrick Ravignat recalls:

Pendant 15 jours l'Odéon a été gouverné par un comité révolutionnaire qui a mené une politique particulière et jeté les bases d'une pensée nouvelle. Le départ des responsables entraîne la dissolution de la majeure partie des comités en place. Pendant les 15 derniers jours de l'occupation, l'ex-théâtre est quasiment aux mains des services de sécurité. D'autre part des certaines de hippies et beatniks vont venir camper dans les locaux et une atmosphère très différente va régner dans les bureaux et couloirs, qui (étaient) relativement propres dans la première quinzaine ...¹⁹

As a tribune libre it functioned effectively, especially for the first two weeks: tens of thousands of people participated, including tourists, writers, and lycéens, as

well as the university students and workers the idea was originally meant to reach. Slowly, however, the original conception of the Odéon -- a forum for discussion, a centre for thought and creative action, and a reminder of the distaste for a technocratic, programmed society-- disappeared and was replaced by the more radical anti-establishment ideals of the C.A.R. (Comité d'Action Révolutionnaire), the members of which were quick to take control of the Odéon. Thus the attitudes and actions which stemmed from the Odéon became more révolutionnaire, and less constructive in terms of actual revolt, which outside the ex-theatre was growing and involving still more people. Also important to the idea of the Odéon's changing function was the arrival of people who had no real interest in the movement: parasites who were looking only for a bed or a free meal.

In part, many of these later events which occurred within the walls of the Odéon can be regarded as a revolution in their own right. Within the groups, although their reasons for being there were becoming more diversified, there remained a feeling of unity and warmth; one that was echoed in the streets. Again Patrick Ravignant notes:

Dans cette foule descend et s'incarne un esprit de ferveur, de libération, de dialogue. Entre inconnus on s'interpelle, on se tutoie, on partage et on donne pour la première fois depuis des

génération, la communication entre individus n'est plus ce but vers lequel on tend à travers le labyrinthe, c'est une chose de base, évident, éclatant. On se sent quelque chose d'inouï est en train de se produire plus rien tout un coup ne semble impossible.²⁰

Also a kind of sexual revolution among the younger students, the lycéens, was taking place. They were asserting themselves, some for the first time, in an attempt to create changes within themselves, for they had been shown too often that "Ceux que notre civilisation rejette sont tous les jeunes."²¹ Thus an atmosphere of festival and orgy was pervasive among the many who slept with n'importe qui, n'importe quand. They were taking advantage of an ambiance which was willing to accept them despite their youth, and their opinions as valuable for "Le Mouvement Révolutionnaire doit considérer ses membres comme des adultes, capables de penser des conséquences de leur actes, libre d'effectuer toutes les expériences qu'ils jugent enrichissantes."²² Unfortunately, with this freedom of sexuality came drug abuse and an attitude that the Odéon was theirs to destroy as they pleased. Many illegal substances penetrated the ex-theatre, as did sickness, resulting from mass overcrowding and lack of hygiene, creating "un chaos et une crasse innommable."²³ Not only was the Odéon taken; it was mutilated by those who had borrowed it.

Au début de juin, ils sont foule, envahissent la scène derrière le rideau de jeu, la cave et les

loges inoccupées. Leur présence massive est le signal d'un consciencieux pillage: tous les costumes, tous les accessoires de théâtre sont volés, déchirés, saccagés. On s'en fait des vêtements, des couvertures. Les filles se parent de tous les bijoux -- bracelets, diamants, etc. ... qui leur tombent sous la main, et l'ex-théâtre grouille bientôt d'une fauve carnavalesque que aux déguisements les plus étranges. Tous les rideaux, robes et pièces d'étoffe rouge ou noire sont réquisitionnés pour la fabrication des drapeaux anarchistes et révolutionnaires. Derrière la scène un véritable dortoir s'installe en permanence, et c'est un pullulement de corps, affalés, entassés les uns sur les autres, emmitouflés dans les couvertures, des rideaux, des chiffons. Dans cette masse agglutinée, poussiéreuse, et poisseuse de dormeurs, des couples, côté à côté, trouvent le moyen de faire l'amour.²⁴

This abuse of the Odéon continued steadily until its liberation by the police on the 14 June, 1968. By the end, however, the atmosphere inside the ex-théâtre had degenerated even further. Few people still remained, and of those that did, only a very small number were university students who cared about effecting meaningful change within the established system. The majority were either parasites: beatniks, alcoholics, or drug abusers who had no other place to go, or révolutionnaires who still wanted to destroy the structure of French society through violence, in order to achieve their anarchist goals. Barrault still came to his mutilated theatre every day, watched in pain and sorrow the continuing destruction, but was unaware of the plans to liberate his theatre. He recalls:

The C.R.S. [Compagnies Républicaines de Sécurité

(Riot Police)], wearing helmets, surrounded the Odéon and liberated it. It seems that some 'Katangais' who had been driven out of the Sorbonne after infiltrating there, had just taken refuge in the attics of the theatre. The police were therefore justified in 'protecting the students' against what they called les affreux (monsters).

When I arrived (as I did every morning), the operation was just ending. My administrator had not informed me. But indeed there had not been very many people left in the building, in any case, hardly any students. After a short ceremony presided over by the Préfet de Police ... with, just behind him, two representatives of the Affaires Culturelles (at last they were putting in an appearance), "order" was re-established.²⁵

However, even after the Odéon was liberated, it never became Barrault's theatre again. It remained a symbol of embarrassment for the government, a symbol of success for the protesters (as a tribune libre), and a symbol of pain for Barrault.

Barrault's Role

The part Jean-Louis Barrault played in the occupation of the Odéon was an unwilling one. However, he was utterly powerless, caught between the demands of the enragés and the directives of the government. Theoretically, since the Odéon was a state-supported theatre, he was answerable to the government. However, the few directives Barrault did receive concerned only specific actions the government wished him to carry out, rather than proposing an attitude for him to take while handling the situation. These

instructions he found inappropriate. Thus Barrault was forced to walk a fine line, one that would allow him to save his theatre and his dignity and still remain acceptable to both the movement and the government. Unfortunately, his actions made all of the above impossible. Youth rejected him on the basis of what his theatre symbolized for them, the government construed his behaviour as sympathizing with and aiding the revolution and thus rejected him. He was caught in the middle of a situation over which he had no control. Later Barrault realized:

I had yet to learn that what is called 'the conflict of the generations' does not necessarily come from the behaviour of older people; but from rejection by the younger. Anyhow, in that case, I had reason for hoping and being happy; I seemed to be witnessing, in the most natural way in the world, a meeting, even a uniting, under the sign of shared ideas, of a common indignation, of a solidarity in contesting certain things, the age on our birth certificates being no longer important. In reality, I was behaving like a child.²⁶

His attempts to act as a mediator resulted only in his digging himself deeper into a hole. Both sides were blinded by what they saw as right, and compromise was regarded as unthinkable. Unfortunately, it was an all or nothing situation, and it seems that both sides came away from the passion of the movement only more committed to their original views. The government conceded only so far as to recognize the demands and complaints of the protesters, but

offered no real longterm solutions. Thus if the students and workers found any changes occurring, they were not nearly on the scale they had anticipated. Many of the more important issues were never given the attention they deserved.

During the four-week occupation Barrault was given only three directives by the government, via Malraux, describing how they -- the cultural ministers and heads of state--wished the situation to be handled. Barrault says, "I was astonished at the voluntary disappearance of all governmental authority. There was something I did not understand."²⁷ The first was on the night of the storming of the Odéon (15 May) by the enragés. Barrault was officially told to "Ouvrez les portes et entamez le dialogue."²⁸ This he did, but to his distress he was unable to control the hysterical protests and verbal attacks. "Out of that general confusion," he says in Memories for Tomorrow,

... what remains in my mind is this:

- 1) That the action of the students was not directed against either a man or a programme (this was soon stated in their first bulletin d'occupation).
- 2) That the Théâtre de France, as an emblem of 'bourgeois culture,' was suppressed.
- 3) That the Odéon would now be used as a political forum.
- 4) That no dialogue (discussion) was possible.²⁹

"Entamez le dialogue" (see Figure 5) he did, but unfortunately it had no real effect on the situation in the ex-theatre. He received no further instructions until the 22 of May when he was "ordered" to leave the building, which he did, only to receive further instruction to "'on your own responsibility' ... cut off the electricity and the telephone, so as to stop all communication."³⁰ Barrault found this order impossible, thinking not only of the potential for injury to the occupiers, but to the theatre itself. However, the damage that was incurred, even with the electricity, was staggering, as well as surprising, for "during the worst of the riots not one shop was looted and not one shop window broken by demonstrators."³¹ The Odéon-Théâtre de France, however, the "instrument" of Barrault's work, was abused:

My tears were flowing like sweat at the sight of that defiled Odéon, ... a cellar of dirt, hate, filth, destruction, from which all life had disappeared. The dead emit, besides putrefaction, a peculiar smell like a kind of grey dust, the bitter taste of the mouth whose tongue and mucous membranes are now as stony as their teeth.³²

That he did not blindly obey all the instructions handed down to him angered the government. Here, too, they preferred to ignore the problem in hope that it would disappear. Barrault, however, in an attempt to cool the hostilities of the protesters, responded, during the first

days of the occupation, with a statement that would be misunderstood by, and greatly anger, the government. Their anger and disappointment with Barrault was so extreme that he was to receive no more governmental support for the rest of the occupation. In response to badgering by Daniel Cohn-Bendit (one of the student leaders), on May 16, about the reasoning behind, and necessity of, occupying the Odéon, Barrault said: "Jean-Louis Barrault est mort ... Je ne suis plus directeur de l'Odéon-Théâtre de France. Je ne suis plus qu'un comédien comme les autres."³³ By this, Barrault had meant to imply an understanding of the movement's dislike of elitist values and technocratic society, rather than offering sympathy and support to the movement. He was attempting to save his theatre from destruction by reminding the occupiers that it had never been his intention to create bourgeois theatre. In his own defense, he writes:

I can always respond to what can provoke contacts, communication, exchange. It seemed to me natural and satisfactory that a whole body of youth should want to listen to the cries of rebellion ...³⁴

Unfortunately, Malraux and other governmental and cultural official took the statement to mean that he was denying the government and the fact of his own state-supported theatre. News of Barrault's response and misquotes appeared in every major Parisian newspaper. The apparent rejection by Barrault of the attempted cultural

reform out of which the Odéon-Théâtre de France had been created was viewed by the government as a slap in the face. This generated even more embarrassment within the government, which was desperately and ineffectively trying to get a handle on the situation as a whole. Thus, from this moment onward, except for the direction about the electricity of the 22nd, Barrault was given no help in dealing with the mob in his theatre. During this time, he wandered in and about his "ex-théâtre," watching the action, mourning the destruction. Ravnant describes Barrault's disbelief at the state of affairs:

Barrault qui vit pratiquement enfermé dans son bureau transformé en réduit, erre parfois dans "son théâtre" d'un air incrédule, désespéré, mais il n'ose élever aucune protestation. Rejeté par les révolutionnaires, il l'est également par le gouvernement qui lui a donné l'ordre de couper l'électricité de l'Odéon et auquel il a désobéi.³⁵

It was during this period of destruction and uncertainty that Barrault completed his fourth and final adaptation of Rabelais. He could do nothing but plan the production and wait for the return of normalcy. Barrault heard nothing until the end of August, when he was informed that, in spite of the three years left in his contract, he was dismissed. The dismissal, which was delivered to Barrault by one of Malraux's assistants, read:

Monsieur,
 Au moment où vont être publiés les nouveaux

statuts du Théâtre de France, je dois vous informer qu'après vos diverses déclarations, j'estime que vous ne pouvez plus continuer d'assumer la direction de ce théâtre, quelle que soit sa future vocation.

J'ai chargé le directeur du théâtre et des maisons de la culture d'examiner les problèmes découlant de cette décision.

Veillez agréer, etc.,

Andre Malraux.³⁶

The era of the Odéon-Théâtre de France was over.

Retrospectively, Barrault wonders if it was not just another twist of fate which ended his nine years at the Odéon as it did. For although after his dismissal he was given the opportunity to explore other, different aspects of theatre and audience-performer relationships, he had been happy at the Odéon, and it required much focus to start all over again. Barrault believed "that had he been tactful and mustered the spirit of a civil servant, he would still be running the Odéon."³⁷ Although ten years later he felt positive about the change of venue, at the time he was greatly disappointed and hurt. Much of the theatre world, as well, was surprised and outraged. Newspapers explored the potential reasons and ramifications, and when finally he was seen again, with his adaptation of Rabelais³⁸ in December 1968, Barrault was welcomed with open arms. Important theatre people such as Harold Hobson, Marguerite Duras, Samuel Beckett, Laurence Olivier, Sir John Gielgud, Felix Labisse, Claude Mauriac, Fernando Arrabal, and Roger

Blin supported him both in his pain and triumph, signing petitions and writing letters to the editor expressing their disbelief at his dismissal and their joy at his success.³⁹

Much later, Barrault was able to realize that:

The government, unable on 15 May to use the police ... had allowed the Odéon to be taken as one gives a bone to a dog. The Odéon had become a fixation abscess. Because of this the Académie, the Senate, the Louvre and the O.R.T.F. were spared.⁴⁰

Unfortunately, the destruction still took place and the damage was done. Perhaps an additional reason for Barrault's abrupt dismissal as director of the Théâtre de France stems from his handling of the riots and disturbances that occurred during the 1966 production of Genet's Les Paravents (see Chapter IV). Although Malraux had unofficially approved the production, and had even attended a performance, the government could not have been prepared for the outrage of war veterans and French patriots over Genet's portrayal of the Algerian war. Seen in this light, Barrault's dismissal over seemingly harmless statements uttered in frustration and fear, can be better understood. Perhaps the government and Malraux were just looking for an excuse to get rid of Barrault, despite his signing of a six-year contract in 1965. However, the fact remains, Jean-Louis Barrault lost the directorship of the Odéon-Théâtre de France seemingly because he chose to understand the protesters' concerns. In Memories for Tomorrow he recalls:

"We were friends and judging from their spontaneous reaction, I felt with perfect naturalness one of them. We imagined we were admitted."⁴¹ Here he is discussing his relations with Julian Beck and the Living Theatre, but it is indicative of his attitude concerning his role in the May Revolution. Had he not "imagined" that he and his work had been acceptable to the youth, it is doubtful that he would have attempted to show his concern, and his sympathy for their demands, although not their methods. Thus, in choosing to take what he saw as the safest route--expressing sympathy for both sides, and yet supporting neither ideology fully -- he succeeded only in antagonizing both. Because he agreed neither with the government nor with the protesters, he did not fit in. He represented the middle ground, an attitude neither could fully accept.

Of the events of May 1968, Barrault says: "It is not a French affair, it is a world wide phenomenon. In May the lightning struck Paris, that is all."⁴² The force with which the movement hit, however, was stronger than perhaps could have been anticipated. This movement of protest and dissatisfaction took the world by surprise, for although youth are supposed to revolt and rebel, the fact that French youth managed to create an organized demonstration of such unhappiness deeply frightened many people. The government's inability to deal with the magnitude of both the revolt and the protesters' demands is reflected in how little change

actually occurred as a result of the movement. However, the students who created the original revolt succeeded in showing the depth of their dissatisfaction. The May Revolution, although imperfect in many ways, made the world more aware of their youth, youth's concerns, and the contradictions between education and society in the twentieth century.

For Barrault, however, the May Revolution involved many different criteria. Not only were his theatre and his art exposed and interpreted according to standards different from his own, but his own personal and ethical ideologies were judged as well. The Odéon was taken in the name of cultural freedom, for the purpose of exposing the elitist, bourgeois attitudes of the French government about culture. Unfortunately, it seems that it was Barrault and his work that were held up as examples of technocratic, programmed art, rather than the Odéon which, as a state-supported institution, was undeniably an arm of the government. Barrault the artist, and Barrault the director of a governmental agency, were confused by protesters and government alike. Thus the very thing he wished to save by agreeing with neither side -- his work at the Odéon, rather than the institution itself -- was lost. The Odéon-Théâtre de France was taken in the name of further cultural reform, because the protesters felt that it was not living up to the expectations of its creation in 1959. The protesters of the

May Revolution saw Barrault as an instrument which was creating more art for consumer consumption. However, they were unable to recognize the true nature of Barrault's work at the Odéon; they saw only another state-run cultural institution. Ravignat quotes an unidentified person as saying:

Il est très important d'avoir pris l'Odéon au nom de l'imagination, car il faut vraiment imaginer de toutes pièces la société de demain, c'est-à-dire inventer d'autres structures n'ayant aucun rapport avec celles que nous subissons, inventer une autre forme de pensée, une autre logique.⁴³

The protesters were not able to recognize that a new vision about state-supported art could come only from the government, not from Barrault, who made a point of keeping politics and theatre separate. On July 1, two weeks after the liberation of the Odéon-Théâtre de France, he wrote:

I became aware that, on 15 May, I had felt obscurely that the Théâtre de France had had its day. When it was created, no political consideration came into it. Now, supposing it ought to be continued, there would be a political commitment on the part of whoever took responsibility for it. To remain in agreement with myself, I would be obliged to refuse.

It was really my double who said: 'Barrault is dead.' He meant, obviously, the personage, the director of the Théâtre de France, not the human being.⁴⁴

Despite Barrault's efforts to the contrary, the Odéon-Théâtre de France had become a political institution, one where his politics of non-politics had no place. In this light, Malraux had no choice but to dismiss him.

ENDNOTES - Chapter III

¹Raol Veneigen quoted in Lenora Champagne, French Theatre Experiment Since 1968 (Ann Arbor: UMI Research Press, 1980), p. 5.

²It is, however, common consensus among the experts that the protests and demonstrations against the war in Vietnam served as the main impetus for the dissatisfaction with other areas found in the ideology of the May Revolution.

³Charles Posner, "Chronology," in Charles Posner, ed., Reflections on the Revolution in France: 1968 (Middlesex: Penguin, 1970), p. 5.

⁴Posner, "Introduction," in Ibid., p. 16.

⁵Eventually, most French universities went on strike and were occupied, examinations were cancelled or postponed, and at the movement's peak, 10 million French workers were simultaneously on strike.

⁶Posner, "Introduction," p. 13-14.

⁷Alain Touraine, The May Movement, trans. Leonard F.X. Mayhew (Toronto: Random House of Canada, Ltd., 1971), p. 49.

⁸Ibid., p. 73.

⁹Champagne, op. cit., p. 3.

¹⁰Posner, "Introduction," p. 24.

¹¹The militants and anarchists were not a part of the original clash. However, as the movement gained momentum they joined in recognizing an opportunity to 1) fight against the "establishment" and 2) to propagate their ideals and values in the name of student dissatisfaction. However, their goals were not at all the same as either the students or the workers, and perhaps it is their influence that led the Revolution to such a violent and unsatisfactory end.

¹²Julian Beck, "91," in The Life of the Theatre (San Francisco: City Lights, 1972), n.p.

¹³Patrick Ravignat, La Prise de l'Odéon (Paris: Editions Stock, 1968), p. 38-39.

¹⁴Ibid., p. 74-75.

- ¹⁵Champagne, op. cit., p. 12.
- ¹⁶Jean-Louis Barrault, Memories for Tomorrow, trans. Jonathan Griffin (London: Thames and Hudson, 1974), p. 313.
- ¹⁷New York Times (June 15, 1968), p. 10.
- ¹⁸Barrault, op. cit., p. 316.
- ¹⁹Ravignant, op. cit., p. 181.
- ²⁰Ibid., p. 31.
- ²¹Ibid., p. 206.
- ²²Ibid., p. 204.
- ²³Ibid., p. 181.
- ²⁴Ibid., p. 195.
- ²⁵Barrault, op. cit., p. 319.
- ²⁶Ibid., p. 311.
- ²⁷Ibid., p. 315.
- ²⁸Jacques Carat, "Odéon sans Barrault," in Preuves, 18^e année, no. 211 (octobre 1968), p. 78.
- ²⁹Barrault, op. cit., p. 314-315.
- ³⁰Ibid., p. 317.
- ³¹Posner, "Introduction," p. 15.
- ³²Barrault, op. cit., p. 320.
- ³³Carat, op. cit., p. 78.
- ³⁴Barrault, op. cit., p. 312.
- ³⁵Ravignant, op. cit., p. 196.
- ³⁶Barrault, op. cit., p. 324.
- ³⁷In December of 1968, Rabelais was produced and enjoyed a great success in Paris, London, and North America. This tour lasted fifteen months, and does not include the English version of Rabelais, directed by Barrault at the

Roundhouse. This tour enabled Barrault to recognize his love of touring and to explore what happens to a single show in front of different audiences in different theatres. Once back in France in 1970, he and his wife, Madeleine Renaud, created the Théâtre d'Orsay in the former Gare d'Orsay, where until 1980 they created productions under a circus tent.

³⁸Eric Shorter, "Two's Company at Orsay," in Drama (Autumn 1977), p. 20.

³⁹"Prises de Position en Faveur de Jean-Louis Barrault," in Le Monde, no. 7366, 19 septembre, 1968, p. 23.

"Pour Jean-Louis Barrault," in Les Lettres Françaises, no. 1250, 25 septembre-1 octobre, 1968, p. 15.

Harold Hobson, "How Britain Can Repay Barrault," in The Sunday Times, no. 7581, 15 September 1968, p. 59.

Sir John Gielgud and Sir Laurence Olivier, "Barrault's dismissal," in The London Times, 6 September 1968, p. 110.

⁴⁰Barrault, op. cit., p. 319.

⁴¹Ibid., p. 311.

⁴²Ibid.

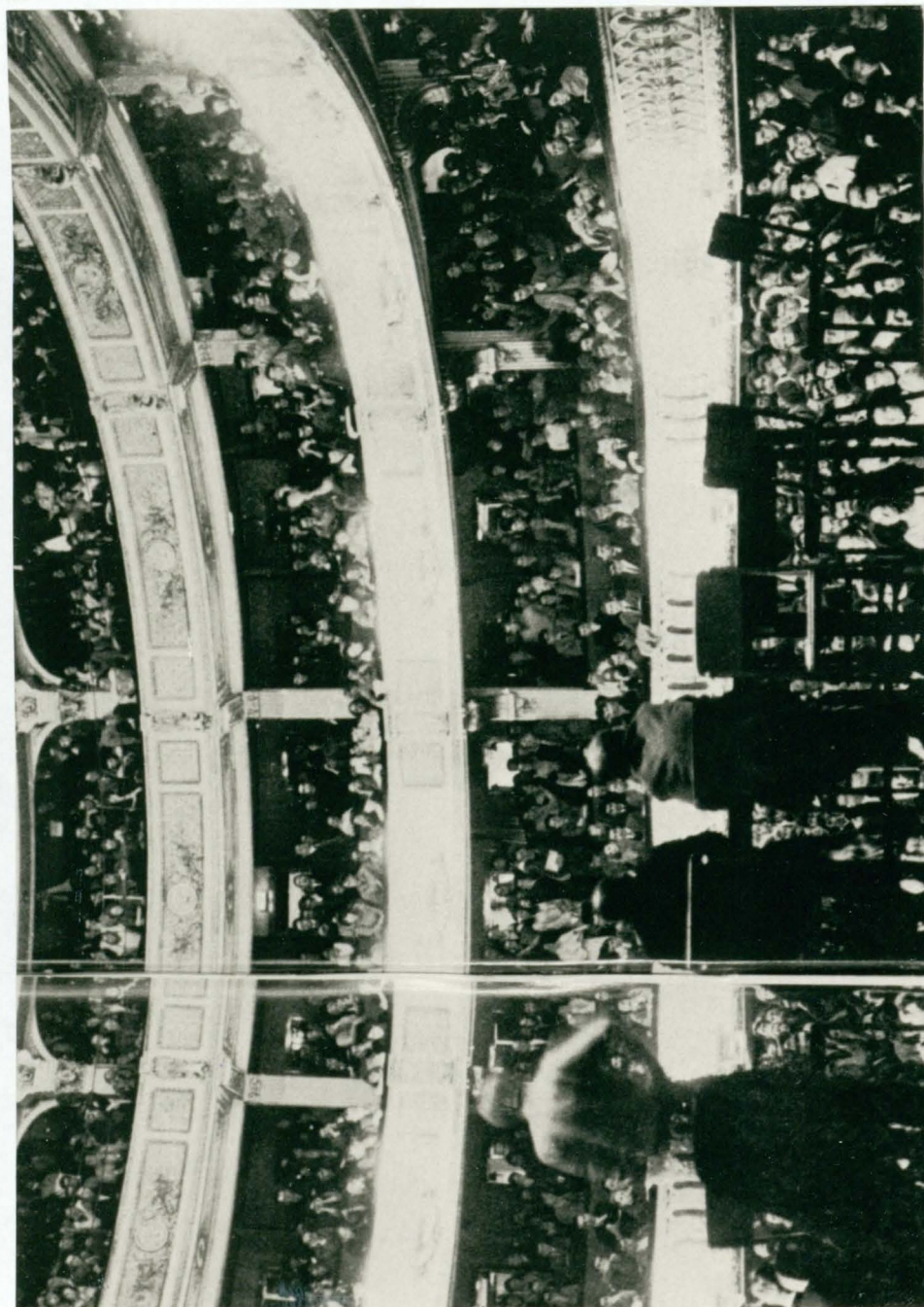
⁴³Ravignat, op. cit., p. 102.

⁴⁴Barrault, op. cit., p. 322.

Figure 5

"Occupiers in the Odéon-Théâtre de France

From: Barrault, Memories for Tomorrow, p. 272, #46.



CHAPTER IV

"Rabelais"

Les Paravents

On April 16, 1966, as part of Barrault's seventh season as director of the Odéon-Théâtre de France, a show opened which would ultimately lead Barrault to Rabelais, the production in which all his many years in the theatre would culminate. The show was Jean Genet's Les Paravents (The Screens), directed by Roger Blin, with Madeleine Renaud as the whore "Warda," Amidon as "Saïd," and Barrault as "Si Slimane/The Mouth." The production, Genet's personal, satirical exploration of the Algerian war of 1954-1958, stirred up a great fuss and created many disturbances in the hearts of both the French nationalists and Algerian War veterans, who felt the production belittled their efforts and made them look like fools.

This fourth chapter will focus on the innovative nature of Rabelais, both in terms of Barrault's adaptation of Rabelais' works and with respect to the staging. First, however, Blin's production of Les Paravents will be briefly explored, for had the public's reaction been less explosive, Barrault might not have created Rabelais with such vehemence. As director of the Odéon-Théâtre de France, the outburst of emotion caused by Les Paravents put Barrault in an awkward position, yet he was able to handle the opposition, and learn something from the situation.

Blin's production at the Odéon-Théâtre de France (1966) was the first time Les Paravents (written in 1958, published

in 1961) had been produced in France. Its subject was dangerous, showing the French colonists in Algeria as oppressors. Perhaps the most controversial element of Les Paravents, however, was Genet's treatment of the Arab; he created a people (exemplified by Saïd, the central figure of the play) for whom humiliation becomes the ultimate tool of freedom. Marc Pierret notes:

In Jean Genet's The Screens the revolt of the Algerian Arabs against their French colonizers is not characterized by the emancipation of human beings. Although the colonizers are described as oppressors inflated with their own power, the misery and intolerable condition of the oppressed are not denounced in order to promote the liberation of the colonized people. On the contrary, these misfortunes are exalted so that the humiliated individual has the opportunity to make his misery the occasion for an inner experience based on the absolute contrast and conflict between his values and those of the Other ... an increasing contestation through which Saïd achieves a sovereignty which no action founded on the hope of a more just world could yield.¹

Essentially, then, Les Paravents chronicles the path Saïd follows to reach this point of "sovereignty." All his humiliations are self induced, that is, he creates situations in which the desired effect will be achieved, and helps convert those around him to his mode of thought. Finally the oppressed realize that self-humiliation is their best weapon, and in death become bound more firmly to each other than they ever could have been in life.

Blin's direction of Les Paravents was close to Genet's

own vision -- they kept in close touch, writing letters (Reflections on the Theatre: Letters to Roger Blin), meeting in Italy (for one month) to discuss the production, and Genet attended the rehearsals. As well, much of the stage movement came directly from the script. Blin used a number of screens as set pieces as specified by Genet in the text (hence the name Les Paravents), in combination with a multi-level set, thus any number of images could be simultaneously created. Some of the screens were like backdrops, in that a scene or locale was painted on; others were blank, with images either drawn (on stage) or projected onto them. Because the set was so visually simple (though capable of complex imagery), costumes were used to create strong and bold images. (See Figures 6 & 7.) Genet points out in a letter to Blin:

In a nutshell, each costume must be a setting in its own right -- against a background of screens, capable of situating the character, but once again this sumptuousness must not derive from a worldly beauty, nor even an imitated or parodied beauty ...²

The use of strong makeup was also emphasized, Genet says; "But as for the makeup, you [Blin] must call upon your dreams, your daydreams, your wildest ravings, and not upon your reason, nor upon your observations unless they are mad."³ In addition, the actors were told to create large, forceful, strong images with their characters, while only

presenting their essences, rather than a full rounded presentation. In this way, the vast range of emotion so important to Les Paravents was explored and created, but without risking caricature. The production of Les Paravents at the Odéon in 1966 was larger than life, filled with the pain, passion and emotion of a text meant to shock and surprise.

Because of the explosive nature of Les Paravents, disturbances in and around the Odéon came to be expected more often than not, especially during the final thirty of approximately forty-five performances. The "incidents" included violence, smoke bombs, riots, demonstrations and dead rats. Le Monde reports one of these disturbances as follows:

Après avoir lancé, au cours du deuxième acte, des oeufs, des tomates, et des morceaux de verre en direction de la scène, une quinzaine de jeunes gens ... ont jeté des boulons, et des feux de Bengale, blessant un comédien et brûlant la jambe d'une spectatrice des premiers rangs d'orchestre.⁴

This kind of violence was typical, although the methods varied. However, as Barrault notes:

We were never obliged to cut short a performance, we always got to the end. Thanks to the determination of the audience. People nowadays believe, because of the demonstrators, that Les Paravents was rejected by public opinion. The opposite is true: 90 per cent of the audience were for us, for Les Paravents and freedom of expression; only ten per cent did their damndest to create such disorder that the police would be

led to forbid the performance.⁵

But as Barrault was aware, censorship in the France of 1966 was practically non-existent. Thus, in spite of the demonstrations and perhaps because of the "90 percent" audience support, Barrault decided to do an additional series of thirty performances of Les Paravents, starting September 19, 1966. During these performances, as well, the outrage, protest and demonstrations continued. The response that Les Paravents generated should have surprised no one. As early as 1964, Marc Pierret foreshadowed the protest in France Observateur:

Mais cela ne suffit pas à expliquer qu'elle (Les Paravents) ne soit pas encore montée en France. Notre théâtre marquerait-il en temps d'arrêt devant cette oeuvre dont l'inspiration corrosive à l'égard de nos mythes nationaux ou révolutionnaires ferait certainement scandale à droite comme à gauche.⁶

And earlier in 1963, in an interview with Bettina Knapp, Blin said of Les Paravents:

It cannot be produced in Paris. It's too dangerous, since it deals with the Algerian War. The Arabs versus the French on stage. Why, we would all be bombed! The play pushes Man's emotions to the extreme limit as only Genet knows how. It's a shockingly brutal, but a magnificently dramatic and human work.⁷

Yet in spite of this, Barrault not only decided to produce Genet at the Odéon, but he created time for an additional

thirty performances. It is doubtful that Barrault was completely unaware of the storm Les Paravents would create, but as Christopher Innes reflects: "he took the riots which followed the first performance as evidence for the spurious morality and bad faith of 'right thinking people.'"⁸ Thus Barrault decided to go ahead with the production, perhaps to see just what protest would erupt. He was not disappointed, and it was the response, in fact, to Les Paravents that drove him to create Rabelais. For like Genet in this instance, Rabelais had been accused of heresy in the face of his unorthodox views. Genet was not thought of as a heretic, of course, but his satirical treatment of the Algerian War angered veterans and nationalists in much the same way as Rabelais' satires on religion and education had angered La Sorbonne (Faculty of Theology at the University of Paris) in the sixteenth century. Unfortunately, Les Paravents had another consequence. Although the play was governmentally approved (by Malraux), the protests surrounding the production could not help but anger de Gaulle's administration, which was already starting to suffer the process of disintegration which would explode into the May Revolution of 1968.

Because of these problems within the government, which seemed to be further accented by the protests against Les Paravents, subtle changes began to occur in the relationship between Malraux and Barrault. During the early sixties

their relationship had blossomed into friendship. Now, however, Malraux started to treat Barrault more like an employee. It was at this time that the communication problems began that would end in Barrault's dismissal two years later, theoretically the result of his role in the occupation of the Odéon. However, the problems and scandal surrounding Les Paravents were certainly responsible for a deterioration in the friendly relationship which had previously existed between Malraux and Barrault.

The production of Les Paravents (1966) at the Odéon-Théâtre de France and the scandal it caused helped push Barrault to create his Rabelais (May 1968), for he too was aware of the controversies which surrounded satire. Satire, as a personal vision, cannot help but offend another's point of view, merely by its creation. Thus, Barrault, as director of the Odéon-Théâtre de France, and Barrault the director, creator, and producer of theatre, was motivated to create his own satire: a loving exploration of Rabelais, his work and his vision. Rabelais, then, is also a tribute to one of France's foremost humanists, while also utilizing the sentiment with which Rabelais was originally stimulated to produce his own works.

Rabelais

Barrault's production of Rabelais in 1968, one of his best-known creations, is also perhaps one of his most

innovative. The production opened on December 17, 1968, at the Elysée Montmartre, a boxing and wrestling ring of 1,100 seats, with room for an additional five or six hundred people to stand at the back. The adaptation, written by Barrault himself, was completed in May of 1968, during the early moments of the student occupation of the Odéon-Théâtre de France. The final version, Barrault's fourth draft, was not intended as revenge against those who had dismissed him. Rather, as previously noted, it was meant as a response to the riots of Les Paravents. Barrault's Rabelais was important for several reasons, but above all because it can be seen as the culmination of Barrault's previous thirty-seven years in the theatre. In Rabelais, Barrault the poet and Barrault the director used techniques and theories in combination that before had only been used independently. The production was also important in that the text was originally created with the idea that Rabelais would be produced at the Odéon.⁹ Not only is the text of Rabelais and Barrault's creation of it onstage innovative, for Barrault mixes genres, time periods, and acting styles with elements from his own theories of mime and geste contemporain, total theatre, the idea of contrived spontaneity, and audience-performer relationships in this adaptation of non-dramatic material.¹⁰ But also, because the Odéon could not be used, further innovation in Rabelais stemmed from the use of a boxing and wrestling ring as the

playing space. Thus, the second part of this chapter will look at the innovative nature of Barrault's text, and the staging and direction of Rabelais.

Conception

It was the protests of Les Paravents that brought Barrault to Rabelais, for he wished to explore the effects satire had on "right-thinking people." But moreover, the demonstrations of Les Paravents opened discussion about the actor's right to present, and the spectator's right to watch, as well as the function of art. "Art exists because we never stop putting ourselves in question," says Barrault. "We must kill ourselves every evening to be born afresh every morning. Art is either revolutionary or is not."¹¹ For Barrault, art is a process through which one learns, although the form in which the specific knowledge emerges is less important than the act itself. Thus for Barrault the meaning and the function of the protest surrounding Les Paravents was reduced to two points: What does one (as an artist) have the right to explore, and how many different groups of people need to become offended during the process before one stops? With Rabelais, then, Barrault was exploring "'free-men' as satiric poets who confronted 'a world of total disorder' and reflected complementary aspects of 'truly contemporary experience' in [his] different [epoch]: Rabelais as 'childhood grasping hold of life in

both hands ..."¹² This he was able to attempt because for Barrault, Rabelais was life. Life lived to the fullest in every aspect: sensual, physical and intellectual. After all, Rabelais was one of the first French humanists, whose ideas and ideals concerned a rigorous programme of self-improvement. One strove to become a "Renaissance Man": master of many trades. Rabelais educated himself in many different fields; thus his ideas and concepts were the result of long critical and analytical study. The parodies and satires which make up his five novels were the result of his dislikes and his loves. That which Rabelais found distasteful he explored and satirized, while revealing the inherent faults. But also episodes and adventures which Rabelais held in high regard were satirized, but with love. Thus, the whole world becomes a sort of playground, where laughter is a part of everything. Both Genet and Rabelais (and Barrault) recognized in satire a limitless means of expression. This, of course, is the bridge between Les Paravents and Rabelais. Furthermore, Rabelais' vision of life closely paralleled Barrault's vision of theatre. Barrault wanted to synthesize the two.

Barrault refers to his play, finished during the explosive moments of the Odéon occupation (15 May - 14 June, 1968) as "un jeu dramatique," and it contains the best-known episodes from Rabelais' five novels. Jean Mambrino notes:

Le Jeu suit l'ordre des cinq livres et présente presque toutes les scènes les plus fameuses de l'oeuvre depuis la naissance de Gargantua jusqu'à la mort de Panurge. C'est dire qu'avec les innombrables paillardises, litanies, scatologiques, couplets d'un gigantesque et joyeuse obscénité, on y trouve aussi les invocations graves et priantes de Grandgousier avant la bataille.¹³

Barrault wished to explore Rabelais' vision of the world as completely as possible, and create a dramatic text that mirrored as closely as possible Rabelais' literary poetry. However, as he notes in the preface:

... in order to remain faithful to Rabelais and paint a portrait bearing some resemblance to him, the enterprise had to be utterly mad. Rabelais had to be taken in his entirety. A play had to be drawn ... - from his complete works.

I have tried to avoid the aridity of the "digest," while combining and concentrating the rich flavours of his writings ...

What else could I do? If I had kept only scatological passages I would have made him nothing but a medico; the erotic passages, nothing but a lecherous monk; the gastronomic passages, nothing but a drunkard; the evangelical passages, nothing but a more or less apostate priest.

Rabelais is all that, and more besides.¹⁴

Barrault with his Rabelais attempted to create a piece which both paralleled Rabelais' life and his works, using Rabelais' own words and images, his vast store of knowledge, and satiric mode of presentation. This, for Barrault, became un jeu dramatique, a form which was able to accept the vast range of spectacle inherent in Rabelais' works. Mikhail Bakhtin notes that there are three distinct kinds of

laughter in Rabelais: 1) ritual spectacle, 2) comic verbal compositions, and 3) various genres of billingsgate.¹⁵ The ideas and images were meant to be presented in such a way as to be accepted independently. Thus the parallels between Rabelais' own time and the disturbances of the 1960's were brought sharply into focus, as was the idea that in order to be completely free, man must first set up a system of rules and morals.¹⁶ Barrault's text of Rabelais (published in 1968 by Gallimard and in English in 1971 by Faber and Faber), includes the principal scenes of Rabelais' five books, from the birth of Gargantua to the death of Panurge. These scenes Barrault chose chiefly because they included dialogue -- rather than the descriptive, evocative scenes which make up the bulk of Rabelais' writings. Rabelais is divided into two parts: "Gargantua and Pantagruel" and "Panurge and the Voyage," in between which there is an intermission. Part one, which includes episodes on education and religious war, contains fourteen short scenes, and focuses on the birth and life of Gargantua and his son Pantagruel (all-thirsty). Part two contains twelve short scenes, plus an epilogue, which concern the voyages of Panurge, Friar John, and Pantagruel. These latter scenes are more allegorical, and seem to explore the conflict set up in part one.¹⁷ Christopher Innes notes:

Barrault obviously saw Rabelais as an alter ego
... the essential action of ... Rabelais ... takes

place on an interior plane ... In Rabelais Barrault divided man into Gargantua, the sensual appetites, Pantagruel, the thirst for knowledge, and Panurge, the physical instincts.¹⁸

In this way, Rabelais becomes a sort of "Everyman" adventure. Bill Wallis, who played Baby Gargantua and Aeditus in the 1971 English version of Rabelais at the Roundhouse Theatre in London, describes Rabelais and his works as seen through the eyes of Barrault:

A scholar, monk, physician, philosopher and satirist, Rabelais produced, between 1532 and 1553, a compendious series of satires on pedantry and academicism, military conquest and expansionism, the Law and the Church. He championed François the First and Church Reformers, and advocated the humanist philosophy, for all of which he suffered hostility and persecution all his life.

His [Barrault's] satire was dressed in fantastic tales of giants and journeys, full of archaic language and esoteric information, bawdy, energetic and explosive ...¹⁹

It is these sentiments and feelings that Barrault wishes to make clear in his adaptation of Rabelais' literary masterpieces and social commentary.

Staging

The Elysée-Montmartre, the wrestling and boxing ring which housed Rabelais during its run of two seasons, was built in 1807 as a dance hall. Since then it served many functions: ballroom, beer garden revolutionary club, cinema, chansonnier, skating rink, wrestling and boxing ring and, in

1968, a theatre.³⁹ Moreover, it had the honour of being the "scene of Toulouse Lautrec's La Goulue and the Can Can ..."²¹ The hall itself was of fair size and square, and for this space Matias designed a cruciform set which was surrounded by spectators on all sides (see Figure 8). It was essentially "theatre-in-the-round," and in fact Barrault's first opportunity of working without a proscenium arch. The playing area consisted of two large (raked) runways which crossed in the centre. The actors entered through the audience and by means of stairs located on the four ends of the cross. Bastide describes the set as "sur ce ring trop petit, il a fait un immense losange en croix, par deux passerelles."²² Thus the boxing and wrestling ring made up the centre of the stage, the ramps extending out at ninety-degree angles to provide more playing space.

Because the acting space and set were so stark, the use of mime, geste contemporain,²³ sound (designed by Michel Polnaroff to set off the language and further create locale), and props (picked up or fabricated by the "strolling players" as they created a particular character for a particular scene) became especially important. All sense of location had to be created through these means. About the use of the Elysée Montmartre and the set, Barrault notes:

Cette salle nous a donc aidés dans les rapports humains, et elle nous a fourni certains éléments

qui ont permis une interprétation à la fois symboliste et réelle. Il y a aussi cette chaleur humaine, ce sentiment du groupe, que l'on sent dans les stades, les hippodromes, et les bonnes salles de spectacle.²⁴

Because the Elysée Montmartre was already filled with the theatricality of the sports which took place there (on Sundays), its game-like atmosphere was ideal for Barrault's jeu dramatique. The onstage action, filled with the excitement and intellectual passion of Rabelais' perceptions, was the game, the stage (ring), a playground for the unleashing of energy. There were also moments when the space was both a theatre and sports arena; Barrault used some of the Elysée's athletes in Rabelais; they boxed and wrestled, in addition to creating stage fights.

There were, however, two major problems with the space that Barrault's staging was not able to alleviate: sight lines and acoustics. John Calder notes:

It is hard to see what are the good and what are the bad seats, because one sees and hears excellently at times and badly at others and certainly spectacle will always go down better here than the quietly spoken literary play.²⁵

Mention of these aural and visual problems was made in many reviews, although the problems themselves seemed to stem from the use of a space created for purposes other than theatre. Barrault attempted to minimize the effects by raking the four ramps, adding seats, and creating many

visuals, so some bit of stage action could always be seen from any viewpoint. As well, Barrault directed his actors to enter and exit through the audience. Barrault was working within the confines of a difficult space. Unfortunately, there was a limit to what could be done to mitigate the problems.

Rabelais: Innovation

In 1950, Eric Bentley wrote of Jean-Louis Barrault, "To accept him, you have to accept the theatrical enterprise-- in all its chaos."²⁶ This perception of Barrault's work has continued to be truthful, but never perhaps with so much relevance as with respect to Rabelais. Barrault's adaptation and direction of Rabelais' works are a spectacle of all that is theatrical; the production was a joyful, almost religious exaltation of movement, colour and sound; a feast of theatrical styles and genres; a glorious expression of the most theatrical elements of the theatre. Robert Kanters in L'Express remarks:

Physiquement, le spectacle vent être un grand jeu, une fête, dans la tradition du grand animateur qu'est M. Barrault. Cortèges, défilés, bagarres, morceaux de bravoure bien réglés ...²⁷

As noted above, in Rabelais Barrault combined many different elements and techniques to create a production which worked as a complete unit. Remaining faithful to Rabelais' original texts, Barrault also used a variety of

different styles and genres, hereby giving his actors a great challenge. In addition, he created a framing device designed to emphasize the theatricality of the event. This was achieved by involving the audience and showing them that the production was intended to be theatrical rather than real. The framing device created a sense of play within a play. Barrault also used contrived spontaneity, which was employed to make all on-stage action appear improvised, when in reality it was not. Furthermore, for the production at the Elysée Montmartre in December of 1968, Barrault used elements pulled from his theories on audience/performer relationships (communion), mime and geste contemporain (see Endnote #42), and total theatre. Christopher Innes notes that with respect to Rabelais,

There is a continuing attempt to generate myths in T.S. Eliot's sense of large controlling images that give a meaningful structure to otherwise chaotic and fragmentary experience. The merely phenomenal is given spiritual significance by incorporating the whole natural world in the gestures and movements of the human body, and the extension of mime into 'total' physical language where every aspect of stage presentation relates to a symbolic reality distinct from ordinary life.²⁸

It is in this way that Barrault combines all the different theatrical elements with the inherent theatricality of Rabelais' works to create a complete overall image and style out of many bits and pieces. Thus the underlying sense of Rabelais is one of theatricality, for even in Rabelais' own

writings, it is this element which allows the words and images to break free and become real. It is because Rabelais originally intended his words to be read aloud that they translate so effectively to the stage. This is the oral tradition out of which the theatre was born. In Memories for Tomorrow, Barrault writes:

Theatre in the state of being born, through language as well as through bodily expression. The style of the strolling player. Close relations between actors and spectators. The joy of the body and the joy of the spirit. The carnal faculty of touching mysteries of life. Breaking out of one's own circle by an exaltation and enlargement of soul. And that ineffable feeling of primitive charity which had driven me, beginning in childhood, to rush towards human beings, all human beings on earth.²⁹

So as with Christophe Colomb (1953), Barrault uses contrived spontaneity: Rabelais was to appear spontaneous, as if the men and women on stage had just thought of taking the audience on this voyage. The means are a bit more subtle, perhaps, for this idea, unlike that in Christophe Colomb, is never actually stated, but rather conveyed by means of a kind of narrator, alternating between the "Orator of the Company," played by Barrault himself, and the "Play-Leader." However, the actors did first appear in modern dress, weaving in and out of the audience, carrying the bulk of their props with them. This reinforced the idea that the actors were to be seen as strolling players who had just decided to perform, rather than performers who were

regulated by time and space. As well, the spectators were often directly addressed by the actors, thus making the audience a more necessary part of the performance. All of these elements, which are part of Barrault's idea of contrived spontaneity (for, obviously, nothing about the production was left to chance), gave the audience more sense of being involved, being part of an event, than would otherwise have occurred.

The "Orator of the Company" and the "Play Leader," the latter of which remained on stage for much of the time, were responsible for delivering a running narrative discussing the onstage action from an onlooker's perspective, rather than from the point of view of a participant. This commentary, which both set the mood for the action on stage and in part explained and commented upon it, helped to set up a frame for the event. This frame of theatricality stood in contrast to the attempts to make the piece seem natural and spontaneous through the use of contrived spontaneity. Thus, the piece was reduced to a theatrical game in which everyone could participate. This contrast was designed to emphasize the idea that theatre can be both created and experienced by any and everyone, not just specialists.

This idea perhaps is the result of Barrault's concept of audience-performer relationships. That is, the theatrical event is a give-and-take situation, an act of love, and the resulting communication between performers and

spectators is so holy as to result in a kind of communion (see Chapter I). Barrault realizes this concept in Rabelais by involving the spectators, and by providing them with a multitude of images and emotions to explore. The episodes in Rabelais may be satires or parodies of experiences in Rabelais' lifetime, but Barrault finds much of the sentiment to contain real truth. Thus they are played seriously and the spectators themselves are given the opportunity to react and to experience the emotion. This emotion is transformed into an energy that the performers sense; they in turn use it to create another different emotion needed for the next scene or moment, and thereby send it back to the audience. In this way a rapport or communication is established.

This concept, seen through the eyes of a critic, can be translated into a scene or moment that worked particularly well; one that caught her full attention, and replaced her analytical viewpoint with one of emotion. Elsa Triolet says of Part II, Scene V, "The Storm," a scene in which Pantagruel, Panurge, Friar John and their compatriots face a storm at sea: "Et la scène de la Navigation à son début, est l'une des plus réussies du spectacle, le navire indiqué par les seules cordages tombés des centres et les mouvements tanguants et roulants des marins."³⁰ Thus the actors create the context of the event, and work to provide the action as well; but because the idea of "Everyman" is so prevalent in Rabelais, the audience is able to view the

action as an extension of their own lives and dreams. They are able, albeit passively, to take part. Barrault notes: "cette participation permet effectivement d'entraîner le spectateur dans la connivence de l'illusion."³¹

Another aspect of Rabelais which aided in bringing the spectators inside the event, rather than presenting a piece which left them on the outside looking in, and an aspect that also created more opportunity for communication between actor and spectator, was the use of a boxing/wrestling ring as the playing space. The use of the Elysée Montmartre was unplanned; Rabelais was written to be performed in the main auditorium of the Odéon. However, the space (Elysée Montmartre) lent itself readily to the sense of spectacle in the Rabelais text. Bastide notes:

[Rabelais] est une vraie fête, telle que Barrault n'aurait jamais pu la réussir au Théâtre de France et qu'il offre à Paris avec l'enthousiasme d'un jeune homme.³²

Because the Elysée Montmartre did not have a true auditorium, although it could be considered a theatrical space, it could not be thought of as a "real" theatre. Thus the spectators' expectations about the forthcoming production were not as rigid as otherwise. They had no real choice but to immediately accept the conventions they were presented with. Moreover, there were aspects of the ring, the use of which aided Barrault (and Matias) in successfully

creating an ambiance into which circus, satire and spectacle would fit. The sense of Rabelais (and Rabelais' works) was festive; it was necessary to bring the audience into this lighthearted atmosphere. The first of these elements was the vendors' stands, for the auditorium was still used for wrestling and boxing on Sundays. The audience member was first confronted with "les odeurs de frites qui rôdent sur le trottoir -- mais à l'entrée un écriteau vous rappelle qu'il est 'défendu d'apporter ses frites dans la salle' ..."³³ The second element was, as François Bastide notes,

Les loges des acteurs sont un peu partout, derrière les promenoirs, autour du bar, et on les voit passer dans leur costumes ou en peignoirs, comme les catcheurs, mêlés au spectateurs.³⁴

Moreover, portraits of the likes of Rabelais, Jarry, James Joyce, Ubu Roi, Kafka, Molière, François I, and Marguerite de Navarre were hung on the walls by Barrault, emphasizing the context of "l'oeuvre et la vie de Rabelais se situent à un carrefour particulièrement important de l'histoire de la civilisation."³⁵ In essence all these elements set up the sense of jeu and jouer in Rabelais, which pulled the audience in, and created the communication. The actors wandering about, and the smell of frites, went against standard theatrical convention. But because the actors accepted, and no doubt played with it, the audience also accepted the break in etiquette. They were then able to

accept a fantasy-filled game in which they participated, rather than a performance which they would have simply watched.

As previously noted, the overall style of Barrault's production of Rabelais was large and joyful, designed to emphasize the joyful spontaneity of Rabelais' satirical episodes. Important as well, as Barrault often points out, is the idea that the actors were to think of themselves as strolling players. Thus, in a style such as this, and especially in light of the number of different genres found in the pieces, sometimes within scenes, the use of mime and geste contemporain to both create specific images as well as emphasizing others, was of great importance. Bill Wallis, who participated in the 1971 English production at the Roundhouse, makes note of several examples in "Jean-Louis Barrault's Rabelais." The first of these is in Part I, scene vii, part E, "Gargantua's Return." Here Gargantua, the giant, "... aids his father's cause by performing fantastic deeds of valour (and appetite) in the taking of the castle of Vede. Pichrocole is defeated."³⁶ The text speaks of the great horse he rides; thus Barrault took this opportunity to create a mime horse, on which Gargantua rode. Barrault performed the mime sequence of an energetic "great mare" himself; not only was he a proficient mime, but he had mastered mime horses in 1931 for Autour d'une Mère. Another instance where mime and geste contemporain was used is also

in scene vii, part I, part A, "The Sweet Life: The Incident." Here Grandgousier's peasants and farmers wish to trade goods with Picrochole's bakers, who refuse. A fight breaks out; it is this event which leads to the outbreak of war. Wallis notes that the scene begins with "a dance-mime sequence (farmers gathering nuts and protecting their grapes from starlings) ..."37, which moves into a wrestling match as the fight begins.

So in Rabelais there was ample opportunity for mime sequences, as well as for the physical agility necessary to geste contemporain. Another example is Part I, scene viii, "The Abbey of Thelema," which explores the difficulties of and with Medieval religious practices, and suggests alternatives which are echoes of Rabelais' humanist ideas on religious reforms. In the script, Barrault describes a dance celebration which later turns into a mime accompanying the text. Further on, this same mime turns into a tennis game, using the sun as the tennis ball. Wallis' description of this scene is not specific, although he mentions the use of mime, dance, and music. Thus because Barrault as a director preferred to give his actors interpretations (see Endnote #36), it can be assumed the onstage action was as close as possible to the textual stage directions (script). Sequences of this kind, prevalent throughout Rabelais, were important to the overall style: as Barrault points out, "I want style and precision within an appearance of

improvisation and confession."³⁸ In order to augment the capabilities of the cast as a whole, Barrault used both dancers and wrestlers, thereby ensuring his ability to present Rabelais as he envisioned it. Often in the text of the play, Barrault points out monologues or scenes that are to be illustrated by mime. moments for "fights" or dances to occur, or episodes when a locale is to be discovered by means of a sequence of mime or geste contemporain. An example of this latter point can be seen in part II, scene ii, "Fitting out," and iv, "The Sheep." In the first of these two scenes, Pantagruel's ship is readied for departure; the second scene takes place as the ship is getting underway. Panurge tricks a herd of sheep into jumping overboard. Again, exactly what occurred onstage is a bit unclear, although Robert Kanters refers to the scenes as "le navire mime." Furthermore, Wallis notes:

Perhaps the section of the play that needs the most sustained, precise physical activity and concentration. The sailors' mime sequences required constant rehearsal -- not simply of a detailed plotting kind, but physical practice, so that the unison mime should become more and more fluid individually, and gradually acquire the precision that keeps the poetic image of a ship at sea quite acceptable visually. The gentle undulations of the calm passages needed as much work as the violent movements of the storm sequence.³⁹

There were sequences of this kind in many of the scenes, and in those where an overall context was not being created,

there were specific moments where the use of body greatly enhanced the emotion. For example, the stage direction in the text for Part I, scene vi, "Humanist Education," a scene that parodies education, reads: "A very handsome man appears, between eighteen and twenty years old. He performs a mime, not illustrating the text, but in counterpoint to it."⁴⁰ Wallis describes part of the process the Roundhouse actor went through to create the above moment:

This is a rich and lengthy sequence of mime illustrated speech. Gerald Harper had already been to Paris to work with Barrault on this passage (played by Barrault in the Paris production). Rehearsals of this particular section were for him a matter of constant polishing of movement, and of integrating it with speech and music sound-track. The dance that marks the holiday is a free rock and roll outburst.⁴¹

Here the two points are brought into focus: the first, Barrault spent much time creating movement that would enhance a particular moment or scene (and ultimately the overall production); and second, every element was well thought-out and choreographed, despite the appearance of chaos. The movement in Rabelais, one of Barrault's fortés, not only made the production visually exciting and interesting, but because the action was to appear spontaneous, it again emphasized the sense of playfulness and jeu inherent to the production.

Another aspect of Rabelais that was important to the

style of the piece and the way it was performed was the combination of different genres found in the text. As in the original, Rabelais contains a mixture of many different styles. These changes exist in Rabelais' original works for two reasons. First, although Rabelais was writing during the beginnings of the French Renaissance, he was still using the eclectic, melting-pot style so popular in the Middle Ages. Secondly, although Rabelais recorded his creations on paper, the oral tradition of storytelling was still the standard mode of expression. Rabelais intended his works to be read aloud. Thus, in an attempt to explore what was possible on paper, for the novel was a relatively new concept, and to create episodes that would also captivate the listener's attention, he varied his styles. Thus, one finds, in any combination, comedy with drama, vaudeville with mime, melodrama with parody and satire. Most often the genre changes occurred scene by scene, although sometimes combinations of the above styles were part of the same scene. Obviously, the acting style must necessarily change as did the genre; at times the actors were required to jump in or out of a style or moment with lightning precision.

Part I, scene x, "Pantagruel's Childhood," a broad farce concerning Pantagruel's appetite, and scene xi, "Concerning Rabelais and also Pantagruel's Education," a parody on the process of learning, are examples of stylistic changes in two consecutive scenes. Scene x is farcical and

needed to be played with in order that its intention could come through. In part I, scene x, "Pantagruel's Childhood," it is by these means that the sense of farce becomes apparent. Both the language used and the images presented are exaggerations. Thus, in order to be true to the présence invisible, the onstage action and emotion must also be larger than life. However, on an exterior level (présence visible), the actors had also to retain the sense of strolling players at all times, in order to guard the frame of jeu dramatique. Thus the actors had to both create the atmosphere of strolling players (exterior) and perform scenes from the text (interior). Each performer was required to create and play on a dual level.

Total Theatre

Of total theatre, Barrault says it is "the one which makes use of the man 'in his totality,' his gestures, pantomimes, dances, breath, cries, articulation, speech, poetry and singing."⁴⁴ This idea, which Barrault had explored since 1931 within the framework of many different production styles, is central to his concept of Rabelais. After all, what is Rabelais about, if not using man 'in his totality'? Both Barrault's text and staging of the play explore these elements; as David Bradby notes, "Barrault ... drew together elements from all the currently fashionable performance styles and brought them together in an

invigoratingly new, open space, freed from the constraints of the proscenium arch, the boxes, the red plush ..."⁴⁵ Furthermore, Irving Wardle describes Rabelais as "Living theatre school colliding with the austere theatricalism of the Copeau tradition."⁴⁶ Henry Adler comments: "The Rabelaisian meaning in its depth and subtlety, its wit and fantasy, is rendered into movement, dance, music, and becomes theatrical poetry."⁴⁷ Thus it seems as if Barrault drew on many different styles and elements of the theatre in his creation of Rabelais; using concepts made famous in the sixties with productions like Hair, or by practitioners such as Jerzy Grotowski and Julian Beck, as well as practices he explored with Dullin, Decroux, Artaud and Claudel in the thirties and forties. It is by the combination of these different elements, theories and practices that Rabelais could realize its full potential. Total theatre, by Barrault's definition, is raw, fresh, and alive; it involves elements of the primitive. Rabelais, the jeu dramatique, shares these elements, for in a glance all elements of the theatre can be explored. Thus Rabelais was not just another example of total theatre, nor was it a piece to which the concept had been applied. Rather, it was total theatre at its finest, owing to its exploration of all that was alive and theatrical.

Images

The final aspect of Rabelais which must be explored with respect to both text and staging is the interpretation of images created in the play by the critics and the public. These interpretations, however, have little to do with the actual text; rather they are the result of critics expecting and therefore looking for certain elements and reactions. These ideas seem to have been superimposed onto the production without any real concern for how they fit into the structure of Rabelais. Because the production was Barrault's first appearance after his dismissal from the Odéon, perhaps the critical world saw elements in Barrault's Rabelais which satisfied their sense of outrage at the circumstances surrounding his dismissal, rather than images Barrault had consciously created. Christopher Innes notes:

Inevitably given the timing of the production, Rabelais appeared an act of self defense in direct response to the youth revolution of May, 1968 ... Initially, however, the show had been conceived as a counterblast to the public outrage against Blin's production of Genêt's the Screens ...⁴⁸

Part I, scene viii, "Picrochole," for example, was seen as a parallel to the student revolt of 1968, and as an act of retaliation, when in fact it was actually Rabelais' own satire on war. But it seemed as if Barrault was mocking the world which had so misunderstood his intentions during the occupation of the Odéon. Bastide says:

[Barrault] a fait hurler mille phrases mille fois plus contestataires que celles de la Sorbonne et de l'Odéon réunies, il a planté Thélème au cour de Montmartre et il a dit à tous "Fais ce que tu voudras parce que gens sont libres" ..⁴⁹

and Irving Wardle notes, "It is at once a gloss on the student revolution (of which M. Barrault has experience) ..." ⁵⁰ It does, however, seem more likely that these impressions were created by the public and critics trying to find a context for a work they did not quite understand. The production was a "counterblast" as Innes notes, but to the reaction to Blin's 1966 Les Paravents, and in a far subtler fashion than Barrault was given credit for. Thus, as Henry Alder perceptively comments:

Seeing the production, one understands that the ambiguity of Barrault's recent relationship to government and the student revolt was formed by his emotional identification with the spirit of freedom and his aversion to the straitness of doctrines formulated in its name.⁵¹

Reviews

Public and critical opinion of Barrault's Rabelais was mixed, although the production did attract vast numbers of spectators, enough to keep it running for two seasons. One of the reasons may have been curiosity; Paris (and France) was anxious to see what Barrault's next move would be, after his dismissal in August 1968. Irving Wardle notes: "This extraordinary work, with which Jean-Louis Barrault

heroically set about re-building his fortunes after his dismissal from the Odéon, shows official French culture fighting with its back to the wall."⁵² Fortunately for Barrault, Rabelais was an overall succes, both in terms of his reputation and financially, for as he reveals in Memories for Tomorrow: "... we had scraped the bottom of every drawer to make this folly a reality, and had committed ourselves far beyond that. It was really 'all or nothing.'"⁵³

Despite the mixed opinion, there were three points all the critics did agree upon. The first was the acting which was consistently strong, especially Dora Doll as Gargamelle and Gérard Boucaron as Gargantua (enfant).⁵⁴ Dumur notes:

Comme Barrault a adopté un style parodique, presque un style forain et a utilisé des danseuses, des catcheurs et cet extraordinaire acteur Bibendum (Gérard Boucaron), ... les autres acteurs ... ont renoncé au prétendues finesses de leur métier. Ils jouent gros. Ils se déchainent. Ils se métamorphosent.⁵⁵

Secondly, Barrault had outdone himself with Rabelais, and both France and the theatre world was glad to see him back with as much strength as ever. The third point, however, is a bit more negative. All reviews suggest that one either should be well versed in Rabelais, or at least take the time to become familiar with his works before seeing the three-hour-long production. The reason for this was Barrault's decision to keep as much of Rabelais' original language as

possible. The audience was not only dealing with archaic idiom, but archaic images and puns as well, for Rabelais' works are indeed an important document of 16th century French culture. Robert Kanthers notes:

choix trop abondant parceque au bout de trois grandes heures même la truculence braguettière devient terne et montone ... La richesse même du verbe Rabelaisien et sa drôlerie tiennent plus de l'art oratoire que de l'art dramatique, ce qui entraîne un peu trop de tunnels, de récits et d'exposés magistraux.⁵⁶

Elsa Triolet, on the other hand, says:

Je menterais si je disais que j'ai entièrement suivi le spectacle, je décrochais tantôt du texte, tantôt de ce que je voyais, sans cesser pour cela de m'amuser et d'admirer, tant l'ensemble est continuellement curieux et beau.⁵⁷

Perhaps there was too much happening simultaneously, too much to see and hear, but Rabelais was after all a celebration, a celebration of life and of theatre. Jean Chalon says:

Le spectacle est sur le ring, dans la salle, partout. Jean-Louis Barrault devrait faire distribuer à ses spectateurs une paire d'yeux supplémentaires qu'on accrocherait à la nuque. On ne sait jamais on regarder et c'est un perpétuel supplice de Tantale.⁵⁸

However, the production succeeded in its aspects of spectacle. Rabelais was a completely joyful experience, the dream of a childhood circus come to life.

Rabelais could be seen as a culmination of Barrault's previous thirty-seven years in the theatre. For here he succeeded in creating a work which lived and breathed like no other. It is this idea of alive theatre, of course, that is at the base of all Barrault's work. For him the theatre is more than an extension of life. It is an opportunity to recreate the emotions which are life.

That Rabelais was by far the most personal work he had created to date took on a new importance, for not only did Barrault both adapt Rabelais' works and create a theatrical context for them, he created his own vision of Rabelais within the structure of his own vision of theatre. Originally Rabelais was a response to the "spurious morality" of those who protested Genet's Les Paravents, but ultimately it came to be a symbol of Barrault's vision of France, for in Barrault's mind, Rabelais is all that is French, and all that is alive. But the play is also important because Barrault, the man who thought of himself as "anti-politique," was making a political statement about Rabelais' ideals and their translation into twentieth century thought. Do what you must ("Fais ce que tu voudras"), yes, but also be aware of the principles of knowledge, truth, justice and honesty, for no one can be free without a system by which to live. It is this system which Barrault tests. Garry O'Connor says: "For Barrault, the theatre is still believed in -- the myth, the rite,

above all the physical involvement."⁵⁹ Barrault's dedication to his art form is seen in all aspects of Rabelais. He loved the works of Rabelais, and those ideas the man stood for. In Rabelais Barrault created a work filled with all the mystery, ritual, passion, and love of theatre.

Conclusion

Jean-Louis Barrault is a man who has devoted his life to the theatre; indeed, he is a true homme de théâtre. His accomplishments are many, as is the number of important twentieth-century theatre practitioners with whom he has worked. As an eclectic, Barrault has gleaned many of his theories and ideas about the theatre from his work with such people as Artaud, Claudel, Beckett, Blin, Renaud, Copeau, Dullin and Gide, to name only a few of the more important. A man for whom learning has always been essential, he was forever experimenting with and exploring the structure and confines of art, in an attempt to further understand the medium, and the way in which theatre affected the spectator. Never one to take stability for granted, he has moved his base of operations many times, much of his dedicated audience following him from venture to venture. Always conscientious, as well, Barrault desired to offer good solid entertainment, but entertainment which also provided his audience with a strong emotion to respond to, or a new point

of view to ponder and explore. Barrault is best known as the mime "Baptiste" in Les Enfants du Paradis (1943), for his productions of total theatre, especially Christophe Colomb (1953), Rabelais (1968), and for his often painful role in the student revolution of 1968.

Barrault's most important contribution to the art of live theatre, however, is as an innovator. Starting in the early thirties with Autour d'une Mère (1931), Numance (1935), and The Hunger (1937), Barrault has continued to synthesize various theories and modes of expression to create new methods and concepts. Not content to follow established formulae, he has broken them down and created new combinations. Exploration of these different forms is what has brought him to such ideas as total theatre, and the use of movement as an illumination of the spoken word, rather than a detraction. Rabelais combines many of the theories and ideas Barrault had been exploring for years. But in a different light it can be seen as another beginning, for with Rabelais Barrault discovered something new. Never before had Barrault combined adaptation, total theatre, mime, geste contemporain, and contrived spontaneity in this way. The production is not merely innovative; it, in itself, is an innovation, one that boded well for Barrault's future exploration of the possibilities of theatre.

ENDNOTES - Chapter IV

¹Marc Pierret, "Genet's New Play: The Screens," trans. Rima Drell Reck, in The Tulane Drama Review, p. 93.

²Jean Genet, Letters to Roger Blin: Reflections on the Theatre, trans. Richard Seaver (NY: Grove Press, Inc., 1966), p. 12-13.

³Ibid., p. 15.

⁴"Nouveaux Incidents à la Réprésentation des Paravents de Jean Genet au Théâtre de France," in Le Monde, no. 6626, 3 mai 1966, p. 16.

⁵Jean-Louis Barrault, Memories for Tomorrow, trans. Jonathan Griffin (London: Thames and Hudson, 1974), p. 295.

⁶Marc Pierret, "Jean Genet Chez Shakespeare," in France Observateur, 15^e année, no. 732 (14 mai 1964), p. 16.

⁷Bettina Knapp, "An Interview with Roger Blin," in The Tulane Drama Review, vol. 7, no. 3 (Spring, 1963), p. 119.

⁸Christopher Innes, "Primitivism, Ritual and Ceremony," in Holy Theatre (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1981), p. 125.

⁹However, as discussed in Chapter II, Barrault was dismissed from his post of director of the Odéon-Théâtre de France in August of 1968.

¹⁰Barrault enjoyed creating dramatic works out of non-dramatic material. By 1970 he had adapted or co-adapted nine works:

Autour d'une Mère (1935)
Numance (1937)
La Faim (1939)
Le Procès (1947), with
 André Gide
Le Château (1952)
Connaissance de Claudel
 (1955)
Amerika (1965)
Rabelais (1968)
Jarry Sur la Butte (1970)

Faulkner: As I Lay Dying
 Cervantes: Numantia
 Hamsun: The Hunger

Kafka: The Trial
 Kafka: The Castle

Kafka: America
 Rabelais' works

From 1972 to 1980 at the Théâtre d'Orsay, Barrault produced similar productions based on the works of La

Fontaine, Restif de la Bretonne, Nietzsche, Diderot and Voltaire.

¹¹Barrault, op. cit., p. 269.

¹²Innes, op. cit., p. 125.

¹³Jean Mambrino, "Rabelais: Jeu Dramatique de Jean-Louis Barrault à l'Elysée Montmartre," in Etudes, vol. 330 (février, 1969), p. 262.

¹⁴Jean-Louis Barrault, "Preface" in Rabelais, trans. Robert Baldick (London: Faber and Faber, 1971), p. 15.

¹⁵Mikhail Bakhtin, Rabelais and His World, trans. Helene Tsivolsky (Cambridge: The M.I.T. Press, 1968), p. 5.

¹⁶Barrault, "Preface," p. 7.

¹⁷For a more detailed scene-by-scene account of the Elysée Montmartre production, see: Elsa Triolet, "A la Salle 'Elysée Montmartre,' Rabelais, ou la boulimie de Vivre," in Les Lettres Françaises, no. 1263 (24-30 décembre, 1968), p. 20-23.

¹⁸Innes, op. cit., p. 126.

¹⁹Bill Wallis, "Jean-Louis Barrault's Rabelais," in Theatre Quarterly, vol. 1, no. 3 (July-September 1971), p. 84.

²⁰John Calder, "Rabelais at the Elysée Montmartre: Paris," in Gambit, no. 15, vol. 14, p. 87.

"True Rabelaisian Revelry on the Paris Stage," in The Times, January 8, 1969, 7A.

²¹Calder, op. cit., p. 87.

²²François-Régis Bastide, "Rabelais: Jeu Dramatique de Jean-Louis Barrault," in Les Nouvelles Littéraires, 46^e année, no. 2153 (26 décembre, 1968), p. 14.

²³Geste Contemporain meant, for Barrault, creating movement and gestures in such a way as to greatly enhance the character or movement on stage. The body could be used to create an object, or identify a locale, as well as create a character. Total body control was required.

²⁴Rose C. Lamont, "Entretien avec Jean-Louis Barrault" in The French Review, vol. XLV, no. 1 (October 1971), p. 36.

²⁵Calder, op. cit., p. 87.

²⁶Eric Bentley, "Two Evenings Chez Barrault," in In Search of Theatre (New York: Random House, 1953), p. 202-03.

²⁷Robert Kanters, "Sur Rabelais: L'ombre de Rabelais," in L'Express, 23 décembre, 1968, n.p.

²⁸Innes, op. cit., p. 113.

²⁹Barrault, Memories for Tomorrow, p. 228.

³⁰Triolet, op. cit., p. 19.

³¹Jean-Louis Barrault cited in Jean-Pierre Pastori, "Pourquoi Rabelais?" in Tribune de Genève, 3 mai, 1969, n.p.

³²Bastide, op. cit., p. 13.

³³Guy Dumur, "Avec 'Gargantua' Jean-Louis Barrault Retrouve sa Jeunesse," in La Gazette de Lausanne, 24 décembre, 1968, p. 7.

³⁴Bastide, op. cit., p. 13.

³⁵Dumur, op. cit., p. 7.

³⁶Wallis, op. cit., p. 86.

This example comes from Bill Wallis' "Jean-Louis Barrault's Rabelais," a discussion of Barrault's English version of Rabelais at the Roundhouse Theatre in 1971. These notes from the 1971 version are being used as well for the 1968 Parisian production because, as Wallis notes, "Monsieur Barrault's intention was to recreate as accurately as he could the sight and sound of the original production ..." (p. 88)

³⁷Ibid.

³⁸Barrault cited in Ibid., p. 85.

³⁹Ibid., p. 88.

⁴⁰Barrault, Rabelais, p. 40.

⁴¹Wallis, op. cit., p. 86.

⁴²Ibid., p. 87.

⁴³Paul Surer, Le Théâtre Français Contemporain (Paris: Société d'édition et d'enseignement supérieur, 1964), p.

313.

⁴⁴Barrault cited in Henry Hewes, "Total Theatre," in The Saturday Review, XL (January 26, 1957), p. 22.

⁴⁵David Bradby, Modern French Drama: 1940-1980 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), p. 169.

⁴⁶Irving Wardle, "Rabelais as Prophet of the Free Society," in The Times, September 25, 1969, 8E.

⁴⁷Henry Adler, "Rabelais and Barrault," in Drama, no. 92, Spring 1969, p. 47.

⁴⁸Innes, op. cit., p. 125.

⁴⁹Bastide, op. cit., p. 14.

⁵⁰Wardle, op. cit., 8E.

⁵¹Adler, op. cit., p. 47.

⁵²Wardle, op. cit., 8E.

⁵³Barrault, Memories for Tomorrow, p. 329.

⁵⁴It is interesting to note that a woman consistently received notes in a production of Rabelais' works, for his views on women were specific and anti-feminist. Women are seldom mentioned except in relation to the pleasure they give men. His fourth novel, however, Tiers Livre, is a dedicated and detailed discussion of the positive aspects and usefulness of women, all of which are traditional visions. Barrault, then, must have subtly changed the original characterization to create a more modern and sympathetic vision of womanhood.

⁵⁵Dumur, op. cit., p. 8.

⁵⁶Kanters, op. cit.

⁵⁷Triolet, op. cit., p. 13.

⁵⁸Jean Chalon, "Barrault a gagné sa guerre Rabelaisienne," in Le Figaro Littéraire, no. 1181 (23-29 décembre, 1968), p. 35.

⁵⁹Gary O'Connor, "Postscript on French Acting," in French Theatre Today (Bath: Pitman Publishing, 1975), p. 92.

Figure 6

Madeleine Renaud as "Warda" in Les Paravents (1966)

From: Jean Genet, Reflections on the Theatre: Letters to Roger Blin, trans. Richard Seaver (New York: Grove Press, Inc., 1966), n.p.



Figure 7

Barrault as "The Mouth" in Les Paravents (1966)

From: Genet, Reflections on the Theatre: Letters to Roger Blin, n.p.

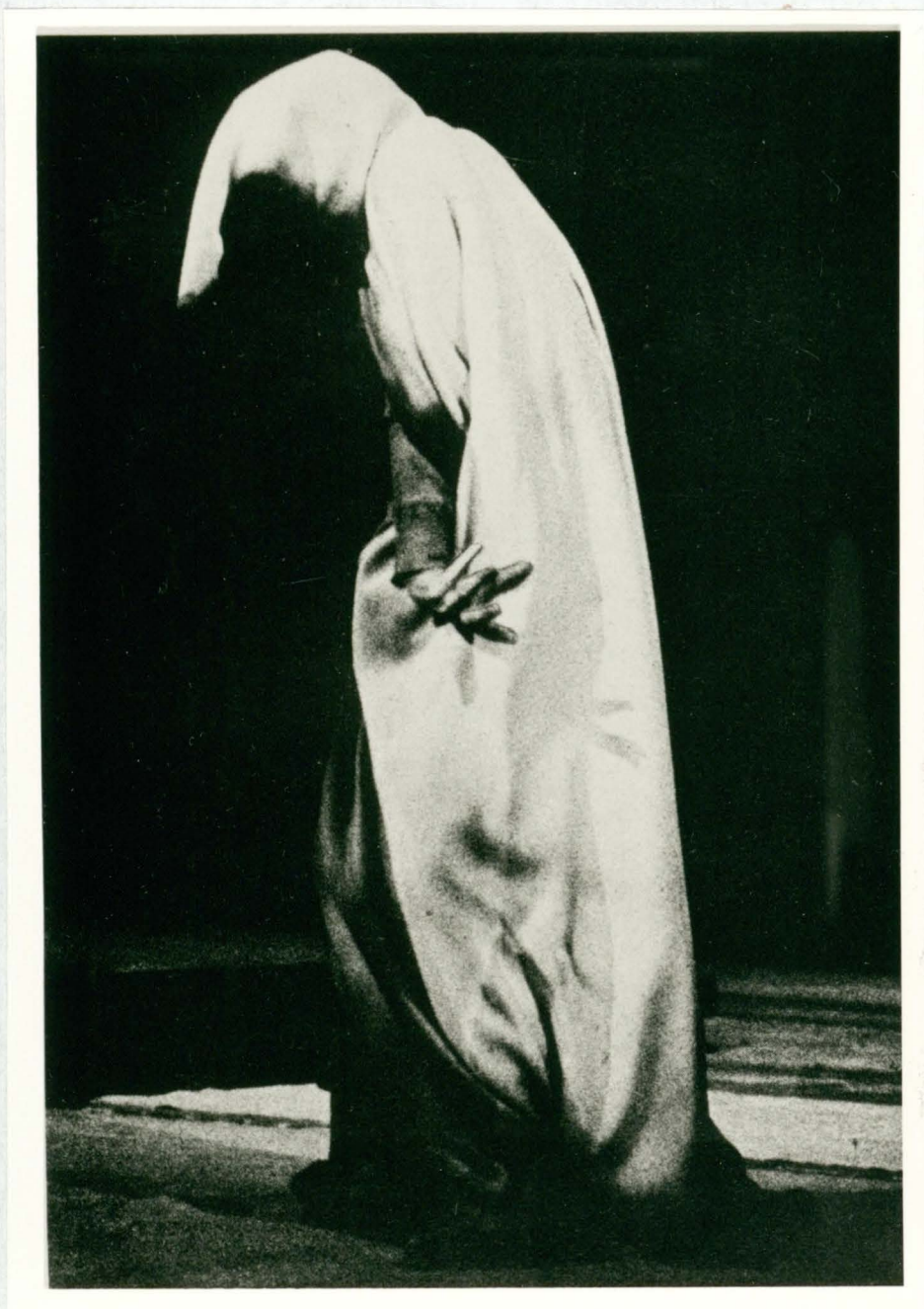
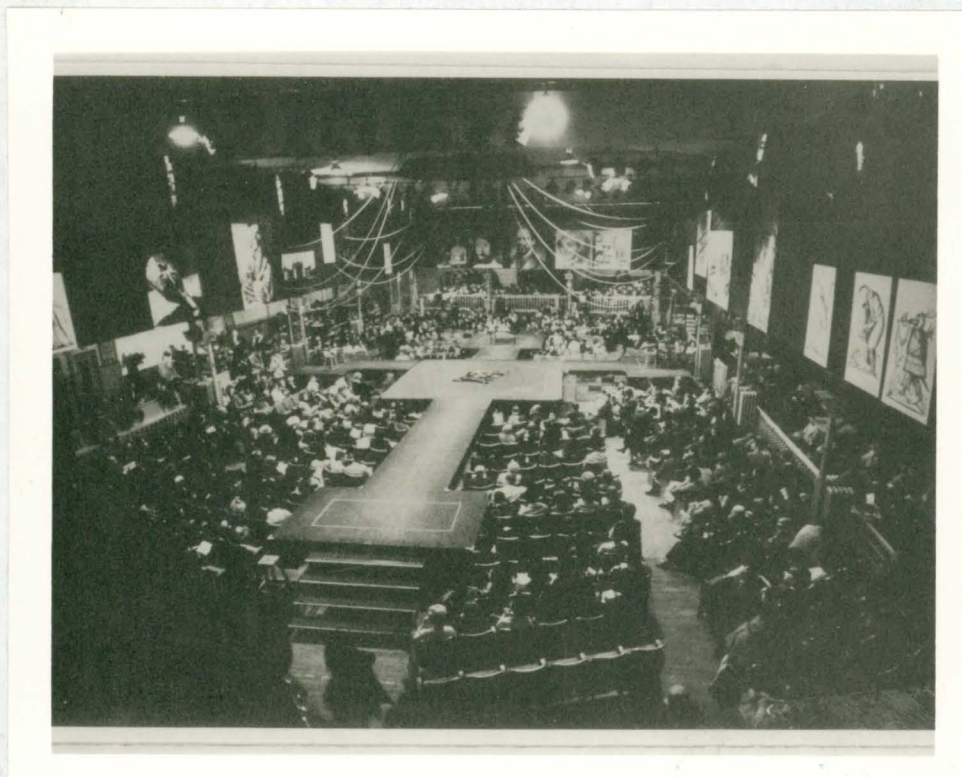


Figure 8

Set of Rabelais at the Elysée Montmartre, 1968.

From: David Bradby, Modern French Drama: 1940-1980
(Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), p. 168.



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APPENDIX I

"A Chronology of the Life of Jean-Louis Barrault"

(This chronology does not attempt to pursue in detail the whole of Barrault's career. Rather, it aims to be an outline of the more important aspects by means of a time line to show the breadth of Barrault's work in the theatre.)

Compiled from:

BRADBURY, David. "A chronology of Jean-Louis Barrault's Career," in Theatre Quarterly.

BARRAULT, Jean-Louis. Memories for Tomorrow.
Reflections on the Theatre
The Theatre of Jean-Louis
Barrault

- 1910 Jean-Louis Barrault is born on 8 September in Le Vésinet (a suburb of Paris), the second son of a chemist.
- 1928 Receives Baccalauréat in Maths.
- 1929 Works with his uncle at a flower stall at Les Halles. Studies painting.
- 1930 Works as a monitor at the Collège Chaptal. Sees Charles Dullin, Louis Jouvet, the Pitoeffs at the Théâtre des Arts across the street.
- 1931 Auditions for Dullin's school and company at the Théâtre de l'Atelier in January. Is accepted on scholarship.
8 September, 1931: first appearance on stage (walk on in Volpone).
Meets and works on art of mime with Etienne Decroux.
- 1935 Produces Autour d'une Mère, an adaptation of Faulkner's novel As I Lay Dying.
Barrault leaves the Atelier.
Makes 2 films: Les Beaux Jours and Sous les Yeux d'occident, both directed by Marc Allégret.
Strikes up friendship with Antonin Artaud, with whom he had worked slightly while at the Atelier.
- 1936 Period of Grenier des Augustins. Rubs elbows with surrealism: Jean Dasté, Jacques Prévert, Robert Desnos, etc.
Makes Hélène (film), directed by Jean-Benoît Lévy.
Meets and works with Madeleine Renaud.
- 1937 Meets Paul Claudel
Produces Numance, an adaptation of Cervantes' novel, Numancia.
- 1939 Helps found "La Nouvelle Saison" with Jean Anouilh.
Produces The Hunger (La Faim), an adaptation of Knut Hamsun's novel.
- 1940 Jacques Copeau asks Barrault to play Rodrigue in Le Cid at the Comédie Française.
Marries Madeleine Renaud.
- 1942 Becomes a Sociétaire at the Comédie Française.

- 1943 Creates mime for Les Enfants du Paradis with E. Decroux, by J. Prévert. Acts in film as well.
- 1946 Jean-Louis Barrault and Madeleine Renaud leave the Comédie Française.
17 October: 'La Compagnie Madeleine Renaud•Jean-Louis Barrault' is founded, at the Théâtre Marginy.
- 1949 Réflexions sur le Théâtre and A Propos de Shakespeare et du Théâtre are published.
- 1953 The Cahiers de la Compagnie Madeleine Renaud•Jean-Louis Barrault are created, edited by Barrault and André Frank.
- 1954 Inauguration of the Petit Marginy.
- 1955 Je Suis Homme de Théâtre is published.
- 1957 Company leaves Théâtre Marginy. No permanent home for 2 years.
- 1959 Nouvelles Réflexions sur le Théâtre is published. Barrault and company accept Malraux's offer to move to Odéon-Théâtre de France. Barrault becomes the director.
- 1965 (29 November) Barrault is named Président of the Société d'histoire du Théâtre.
- 1967 Becomes new director of Théâtre des Nations.
- 1968 (15 May) Students occupy Odéon.
(28 August) Barrault dismissed as director of Odéon-Théâtre de France. Theatre is closed.
(14 December) Rabelais opens at the Elysée-Montmartre.
- 1971 Moves to Théâtre-Recamier.
- 1972 Souvenirs Pour Demain is published.
- 1974 Establishes a theatre in unused Gare d'Orsay.
- 1980 Gare d'Orsay converted into a museum. Moves to Théâtre Rond Pont in the Palais des Glaces.
- 1984 Publishes Saisir le Présent.

APPENDIX II

"Productions at Odéon-Théâtre de France: 1959-1968,
under the Direction of Jean-Louis Barrault."

From:

BRADBY, David. "A chronology of Jean-Louis Barrault's
Career." Theatre Quarterly, vol. III, no. 10
(April-June 1973).

First Season: 1959-1960

21 October 1959	<u>Tête d'Or</u> : P. Claudel (Première)
11 November 1959	<u>La Petite Molière</u> : J. Anouilh and R. Laudenbach (Première)
14 December 1959	<u>Les Fausses Confidences</u> : Marivaux
14 December 1959	<u>Baptiste</u> : J. Prévert (revival of 1946 production)
20 January 1960	<u>Rhinocéros</u> : E. Ionesco.
20 January 1960	<u>The Cherry Orchard</u> : A. Chekhov (revival of 1954 production)

TOUR: Japan, Israel, Greece, Yugoslavia.

Second Season: 1960-1961

7 September 1960	<u>Christophe Colomb</u> : P. Claudel (revival of 1953 production)
27 October 1960	<u>Julius Caesar</u> : W. Shakespeare (adapted by Yves Bonnefoy)
30 November 1960	<u>Occupe-toi d'Amélie</u> : Feydeau (revival of 1948 production)
11 January 1961	<u>Le Vol de Lucrèce</u> : A. Obey (new production)
11 January 1961	<u>Mais n'te Promène donc pas toute Nue</u> : Feydeau (new production)
9 February 1961	<u>Les Précieuses Ridicules</u> : Molière (directed by J.-P. Granval) (new production)
17 February 1961	<u>Le Voyage</u> : G. Schéhadé (Première)
1 March 1961	<u>Pantomimes d'un Sou</u> : G. Segal
6 April 1961	<u>Guerre et Poésie</u> : Poetry by Henri Pichette
5 May 1961	<u>En Attendant Godot</u> : S. Beckett (directed by Roger Blin).

TOUR: South America, Switzerland, Belgium.

Third Season: 1961-1962

15 September 1961	<u>Partage du Midi</u> : P. Claudel (revival of 1948 production)
15 September 1961	<u>The Merchant of Venice</u> : W. Shakespeare (adapted by C. André-Puget) (directed by M. Jamois) (new production)
11 October 1961	<u>The Trial</u> : Kafka (revival of 1947 production)
25 October 1961	<u>Amphitryon</u> : Molière (revival of 1947 production)

25 October 1961 Judith: J. Giraudoux (new production)
 4 January 1962 The Orestia (revival of 1953 production)
 14 February 1962 The Hostage: B. Beher (adapted by J. Sundstron) (directed by G. Wilson)
 15 March 1962 Hamlet: W. Shakespeare (revival of 1946 production)
 24 March 1962 La Révélation: R.-J. Clot (Première)
 24 March 1962 The First Born: C. Fry (translated by Philippe de Rothschild) (French Première)

TOUR: Christophe Colomb: Essen, Germany; Moscow, Leningrad.

Fourth Season: 1962-1963

7 November 1962 Andromaque: Racine (new production)
 5 December 1962 La Vie Parisienne: Offenbach (revival of 1954 production)
 17 January 1963 Les Fourberies de Scapin: Molière (revival of L. Jouvet's 1949 production)
 7 February 1963 Le Piéton de l'air: E. Ionesco
 27 February 1963 La Double Inconstance: Marivaux (directed by J.-P. Granval) (new production)
 27 February 1963 The Bear: A. Chekhov (trans. Elsa Triolet) (directed by J. Desaille) (new production)
 21 March 1963 Divines Paroles: Valle-Inclan (adapted by R. Marrast) (directed by Roger Blin)

TOUR: Italy, Belgium, Switzerland

Fifth Season: 1963-1964

17 October 1963 Le Soulier de Satin: P. Claudel (revival of 1943 production)
 21 October 1963 Oh! Les Beaux Jours!: S. Beckett (directed by Roger Blin) (French Première)
 15 November 1963 Tricoche et Cacolet: Meilhac and Halévy (directed by J. Charon) (new production).
 8 January 1964 As You Like It: W. Shakespeare (adapted by J. Supervielle) (directed by J.-P. Granval).

TOUR: United States, Canada, Italy, Belgium, Switzerland.

Sixth Season: 1964-1965

- 21 October 1964 Il Faut Passer Par les Nuages: F. Billetdoux (Première)
 9 December 1964 Le Mariage de Figaro: Beaumarchais (new production)
 1 February 1965 Hommes et Pierres: J.-P. Faye (directed by Roger Blin)
 1 February 1965 America: Kafka (adapted by J.-L. Barrault) (directed by A. Bourseiller) (Première)

TOUR: Belgium, Switzerland, Germany, Rumania, Austria.

Seventh Season: 1965-1966

- 3 November 1965 Numance: Cervantes (adapted by J. Cau) (reworking of 1937 production)
 1 December 1965 Des Journées Entières dans les Arbres (adapted and directed by A. Barsacq) (new production)
 13 December 1965 Oh! Les Beaux Jours!: S. Beckett (revival of 1963 production)
 28 February 1966 New plays by Beckett (Comédie, Va-et-Vient) and Ionesco (La Langue, Délire) (directed by J.H. Serreau)
 16 April 1966 Les Paravents: J. Genet (directed by Roger Blin)

TOUR: Italy, Switzerland.

Eighth Season: 1966-67

- 14 November 1966 Le Barbier de Séville: Beaumarchais (directed by J.-P. Granval) (new production)
 14 November, 1966 Ruzzante, Retour de la Guerre: adapted from Ruzzante by Mortier (Première)
 30 November 1966 Henry VI: W. Shakespeare (adapted by J.-L. Barrault) (new production)
 10 January 1967 Le Silence, Le Mensonge: N. Sarraute
 7 February 1967 Jeu d'Enfant: C. Bernstein (directed by L. Terzieff)
 6 March 1967 Chicago: S. Shepard (directed by J.-P. Granval)
 6 March 1967 Drôle de Baraque: Hayter (directed by J.M. Serreau)

Odéon-Théâtre de France hosted season of Théâtre des Nations
TOUR: Montreal, New York, Berlin.

Ninth Season: 1967-1968

25 October 1967	<u>A Delicate Balance</u> : E. Albee (directed by M. Galey) (French Première)
8 November 1967	<u>Le Jeu des Rôles</u> : Pirandello (adapted by L. Cervicen) (directed by G. de Lullo) (French Première)
25 January 1968	<u>Tête d'Or</u> : P. Claudel (revival of 1959 production)
28 February 1968	<u>Le Triomphe de la Sensibilité</u> : Goethe (translated by J. Decour) (directed by J. Lavelli)

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