

ANTIGONE ON CYPRUS. By the International Workshop for the Ancient Drama.

Through the winter of 1987-88 and into the spring, Heinz Uwe-Haus and his longtime friend and theatre colleague Nicos Shiafkalis labored to arrange the continuation of the International Workshop for the Ancient Drama. It had begun in 1986 with the cooperation, assistance, and encouragement of Greek citizens from the west-central communities of Katochi, Neohorion, and Agrinion, Greece. Their hope was to build the "International Workshop and Study Center of Ancient Drama" and to press into service the ancient theatre at Oeniades, five kilometers from the village of Katochi.

Nineteen eighty-six provided a modest beginning. In that year workshops and a symposium were held and plans were laid for the future. In 1987 a production of Sophocles' *Antigone* was rehearsed and performed in that little-known theatre. But it was difficult to attend to local arrangements; Haus lived in East Berlin; Shiafkalis was in Nicosia, Cyprus. Their principal artistic collaborator, Professor Andrew Tsubaki, a Japanese-American from the University of Kansas, kept in close contact and was supportive of their efforts. But the time was not ripe for Katochi and Oeniades. They were unable to bring together the forces necessary to stage a new production of Sophocles' *Oedipus Rex*, which they had hoped would follow the successful *Antigone* of 1987.

Undaunted, they put together a brief tour of Cyprus for July of 1988. The production that they had mounted in Greece the year before, and had taken to Cyprus for a performance, was to be resurrected. Six performances in five theatres, following a scant two days of rehearsal by a youthful company of American professionals, were scheduled. Originally, more time had been scheduled, and desired, before the opening. Logistical complications made that impossible, so they went with what was available, figuring that much of the work had been done in Greece in 1987 and that they only needed enough time to integrate the new actors into their scheme. (After all, Charlton Heston played Thomas More in *A Man for all Seasons* with only a week's rehearsal in the London production; their new Creon looked a lot like Heston.) The three collaborators were determined to keep their group together, keep their idea alive.

Half of the original cast of 12 actors, plus several newcomers, assembled in Nicosia on July 15, where they rehearsed. The production opened in Nicosia

on July 18, performed in Paphos on July 19, Paralimni on July 20, Kurium on July 21 and 22, and in Larnaca on July 23. I joined the company on the afternoon of its arrival in Nicosia, followed the rehearsal process, and videotaped all or portions of five of the performances. The following pages contain a summary of my daily notes and some critical reactions to the work that I saw during my ten-day stay on Cyprus.

The Company

Robin Hatcher returned to play the part of Antigone and was joined by newcomer David Drummond as Creon. Elisa Hurt played Ismene, a new role for her, and continued as the Chorus Leader. She also served as Company Manager. Kevin Hills remained in the roles of the Sentry and the Messenger. Tim Zay played Teiresias, as he had in 1987. Tim's spouse, Denise Dalfo, played Eurydice for the first time. Geoffrey MacKinnon was new to the part of Haemon. Susanne McCall, Robert Simonton, and Anthony LoVasco returned to roles in the chorus and were joined by Carol Hughes and Julie Bernstein who acted in the company for the first time. Utz-Uwe Haus, son of the director, and Ephthimios Shiafkalis, son of the co-director, alternated appearances as the Boy. Andrew T. Tsubaki was the choreographer. Glyn Hughes designed the ground cloth and costumes for the 1988 restaging of the play. The program gave equal credit to Haus and Shiafkalis for directing and listed Tsubaki as Production Coordinator. On the job, he actually performed the functions of the Production Stage Manager in American professional companies.

July 18, 1988. Nicosia, Cyprus

The dress rehearsal began shortly after 2:30 a.m., the day that the production was to open. That was the only continuous run-through of the play with this group of actors. They concluded their work and got back to the Hotel Asty, their residence in Nicosia, at about 4:30 a.m. Their work had started the morning before with a rehearsal that ran from 9:30 to 2:30, followed by a break for lunch and siesta until 6:30. The evening session lasted until 10:00, followed by a dinner break until 11:15, when they went to the Makarios III Amphitheatre for their first work in the performance space. There, they helped strike the Cyprus National Theatre's set for *Amphytrion* before clearing the orchestra circle to put down the ground cloth for *Antigone*. By the end of their final (and only) dress rehearsal, they had been on the go for over 19 hours. About 3 a.m. the police responded to a complaint about noise, but they generously permitted the rehearsal to run its course.

The attendance for the opening performance was sparse, or seemed so in view of the vastness of the auditorium portion of the amphitheatre. Its 14 rows, radiating to the halfway point of the orchestra circle, held a small cluster

of people, most of whom selected seats at center, rows 5 to 12. The curtain was delayed until about 15 minutes after the appointed time, probably in the hope that a few late-comers would arrive. Those who were on time were a little restive.

The successes of that evening were due largely to the ensemble work. The actors played well to each other and responded to each other. Their energies were focused, and for the most part, the production ran smoothly. The battle scene, a pantomimic representation of the fight between the forces of Polynices and Eteocles, followed a ceremonial entrance by all 12 actors. The high style of the production was clearly delineated by those two segments. The martial arts--hand-to-hand, foot-to-head-- combat worked. When it was repeated later in slow motion, the audience had a clear understanding that this would be a distinctive production. Not all members of the company handled the vigorous physical work with equal skill and aplomb, but there was enough going on to keep both the eye and the mind occupied. Each stasimon saw the reassembly of the chorus and a distinctive ensemble formation would then unfold, spreading out over the orchestra circle. The concept was strong; the execution, both in movement and in unison speaking, sometimes lacked the precision that only thorough rehearsal and frequent repetition can bring. The chorus did well but clearly could have done better.

Whether a part of the director's fundamental understanding of the play and its characters or the restrictions placed on the production of the play with so little rehearsal, the work of the major characters tended to be one dimensional. Choices were always made in favor of the boldest, angriest response. All of the major characters played anger whenever possible. Antigone had reason to be angry, but the other emotions of the character rarely found expression. Creon, too, played anger through much of the play, as did Haemon and Ismene. So, surprisingly, did Teiresias, who might have provided some nice variety. Tim's interpretation of the blind soothsayer was attractive, but didn't add a new emotional component to the action, something the play needed when that character arrived on the scene.

Kevin's Guard played "desperation" rather than anger, and it was played at such a rapid pace that the humor of the lines was lost. When the Messenger announced the burial of the body his rate was extremely rapid, clearly a directoral choice. A more deliberate, measured delivery might have provided greater texture, and allowed for a stronger change of mood and tone. Such subtle touches were not often in evidence. There is something to be said for change for its own sake to make the audience focus differently on the people and events.

The most dramatic choices, those that dominated the production, came from the actor who played Creon. David is a large man, well-built and imposing. He played the king as a bully, as a tyrant who physically intimidated everyone, especially the Guard and Antigone. There was never any doubt that he was the villain of the piece. Even arguments that had merit were delivered

as pieces of demagoguery by an arrogant, swaggering, vain tyrant. The conflict between protagonist and antagonist might have been better balanced had Creon been played as a better politician. Robin's Antigone tended to remain in a single state of defiant outrage throughout the evening. She showed her attitude by making the largest possible movements, the most strident line readings.

Mind you, the boldness of choice imposed or permitted by Haus was due in large measure to the demands of both the play and the performance space. It is exceedingly difficult to play tragic characters in a large, outdoor theatre. This is no place for the timid. The marvelous thing about the ancient theatres, these performance spaces, is that they compel the actors to do what the characters are compelled to do: defy the king in a big way. Haus, David, and Robin did choose boldly. Their fundamental understandings of what was going on in the play and in the minds and hearts of the characters was clear. It is unfortunate that they didn't have the opportunity to flesh out those solid bones with counter rhythms and contrasting emotional tones. Two excruciating days of rehearsal, with only one runthrough before opening, is hardly enough to add texture to two such demanding characters in spite of the professional training and experience of the actors.

July 19, 1988. Paphos, Cyprus.

The actors continued to work on detail, rehearsing on the stage of the ancient theatre at Paphos right up to 8:30 p.m. They took notes from Director Haus for three-quarters of an hour, worked with Choreographer Tsubaki for an additional 30 minutes. All of this after having cleaned the acting space and set up the lighting instruments, lighting board and tower for mounting the lights. A Greek Cypriot actor who had worked in Nicosia and who was now the director of his own small company in Paphos assisted the actors. It was his board, half-dozen instruments and cable that he loaned the company that made even minimum visibility possible.

The Roman-style theatre at Paphos is a small, 12-row facility seating about 450 spectators. The orchestra circle, in the Roman manner, was actually "D" shaped and about 12 feet smaller in diameter than the Makarios III Amphitheatre in Nicosia. The ground cloth was doubled over at the flat side of the "D", tucked under around the semicircular side. Since the floor was paved with stone, it wasn't possible to nail it in place. Gravity sufficed.

The crowd arrived early. By curtain time, over 250 were in place; 15 minutes later the numbers had swelled to about 280, exactly 100 more than the audience on opening night. It was a crowd that consisted of local theatre-goers and tourists who had come to this sea-side village for the beach or to visit the ancient sites. Foreign tourists were also there in considerable numbers from Padua (an architect), Denmark (a school teacher), England, America, and elsewhere.

The cast's morale was largely positive. One showed evidence of depression, not uncommon with victims of jet-lag, but they were ready to perform. Exhaustion was, however, evident in some ways, large and small. Jeff's Haemon was called upon to engage in a shouting-match with Creon midway through the play. The blocking placed the father in the center of the orchestra circle, the son at the top of the theatron, at the end of one of the radiating aisles. Jeff had a strong voice, but he had damaged it in the rehearsal process and had had no time to rest it. His performance was technically sound, but his voice wasn't at full strength for either of the first two performances.

Kevin, too, was having difficulties on both July 18 and 19. His long speeches as the Guard and as the Messenger taxed his vocal capacities, and my own throat hurt in sympathetic response. David's Creon sounded slightly strained as well, but not nearly so seriously as the other two men's. The three were not inexperienced student actors, untrained and unskilled in the use of the vocal instrument. All three were conservatory-trained in the American tradition and knew how to use their voices. The rigors of the schedule had simply taken more from them than they could comfortably give. There were occasional breaks in the vocal work of the women in the cast as well, suggesting fatigue. The gaffs were not great, but they did rob the production of sharpness and clarity. As so often happens following an opening night, the second performance was played largely on technical competence, a credit to the training of the individual actors. The adrenalin wasn't flowing quite so strongly, but there was better control of the mechanical details of performance. Dance movements were in closer unison and choral speaking tended to be better coordinated. But there were still some imperfections. Some members of the company were able to muster the energy to be sharp and vibrant; Suzanne and Anthony always seemed to sparkle because they have strong physical skills. Most of the other choristers showed their weariness at times, losing appropriate posture or by starting or ending a movement a shade too early or too late.

July 20, 1988. Paralimni, Cyprus

The cast outnumbered the audience. This resort community attracted more tourists to its beaches than to its cultural activities. The theatre, in fact most of Paralimni, had been built after the devastation left by the Turkish invasion that had begun exactly 14 years before, on July 20, 1974. The mayor, who hosted dinner for the company after the performance, said that the people of Paralimni were accustomed to free entertainment in the Amphitheatre. The cast used the performance for rehearsal and bemoaned the lack of box office revenue. After all, they were to be paid out of whatever monies were generated at the gate and several were concerned over how they were going to pay for the ticket home.

July 21, 1988. Kurium, Cyprus.

The first view of the ancient theatre at Kurium inspired the cast. It was easy to see why the Cypriots had chosen the site. The view from the theatron, looking southwest toward Lebanon and Syria, was breathtaking. Local sources indicated that a classical theatre on this site predated the structure now restored to Roman configuration which dated from the second century A.D. At that time it may have seated as many as 3,500, but its 18 rows now would probably accommodate only half that number. The "D" shaped orchestra was smoothly paved. Beyond it, behind the space where a Roman *scenae frons* and platform stage probably existed, there was a drop-off of four or five feet. Then the space went back to nature. It was a lovely place to watch a play.

The cast unloaded the ground cloth once again and spread it over the acting space, tucking it around the edges in order to make it fit the smaller acting area. The 48-foot diameter proved more than adequate for the performance.

The lighting people, a volunteer from Nicosia who had helped at Paphos and a member of the cast, soon discovered that the dozen instruments already hanging did not include one that could serve as a follow spot. Some quick negotiating resulted in aid from the British army garrison just west of the ancient site. A young man appeared within an hour and hung up a 1KW spot that served nicely. The other instruments, most of them 650W, cast a pale glow on the canvas. Neither this nor any of the other theatres was able to offer more than the barest illumination. Anything remotely "special" was out of the question.

The performance had some line fluffs, some mechanical imperfections, but also some improvement. Unfortunately, a very brisk wind blew in from the sea and obliterated much of the speech for the first hour of the performance. The audience seated in the first few rows probably had no difficulty, but the microphone on my 8mm camera boomed in the wind and words and phrases were lost to me.

The audience of about 150 was attentive and polite. Several Britishers came bearing hampers filled with food and wine. (The Romans would have been proud.)

By a strange coincidence, on this date, July 21, 365 A.D., an earthquake struck this area, destroying almost every structure then standing. Modern research indicates that the second shock, the one that took the greatest toll, must have registered 9 on the Richter scale.

July 22, 1988. Kurium, Cyprus.

As I awaited the second performance at Kurium I speculated that the earthquake 1623 years earlier probably reduced the upper portion of the theatron and the *scenae frons* to rubble and that the tidal wave that inevitably

followed the triple-shock may have carried the stones halfway to Haifa. The upper tiers of seats may have been a part of that residue. Everything above ground in the Kurium area--temples, homes, businesses, the stadium--was destroyed by the massive quake, leveling structures that had existed on that location since the sixth and seventh centuries B.C.

Once again the British presence improved the evening's spirit for the company. A young Englishman assisted our actor/technician, a young woman from Washington D.C. She was thrilled to learn that she was the first woman to run a follow-spot in the ancient theatre. (Some of the instruments may have been "original equipment," one cast member remarked.) English people were clearly in the majority in the crowd that may have numbered 125. Some rude banter between two viewers irritated the cast and audience members.

The cast had spent a large portion of the afternoon at the beach a thousand yards beyond and below the theatre. They were a little drained by the sun but felt good to be returning to this spot. It had quickly become home to them. Rumors and concerns over the financial circumstances continued to circulate among the actors, but they remained positive and focused.

After the performance and strike, at the usual after-show supper, several Cypriots joined the company. Talk turned to the director's approach to the play and the actors' experience with his techniques. Several had worked with Haus before and had great confidence in his judgment, respect for his artistic abilities, and admiration for his entrepreneurial acumen. They recalled having experienced some of the Suzuki techniques while training at the University of Wisconsin, Milwaukee, as well. The common ground that many members of the company shared was becoming clearer to me; Andrew Tsubaki had observed the work of Suzuki during a ten-day visit to Japan some years earlier and had employed some of the techniques in his own work. Haus added to the Suzuki techniques his own "physical confrontation" techniques, activity designed to insure full connection between performers, not merely talky, cerebral exchanges. Haus's demand for physical confrontation led to the manifestation of Creon's sadism, influenced how Antigone dealt with Ismene, how Teiresias and Creon interacted, and how Haemon and Creon related to each other. Haus probably cast a very large, powerful man in the role of Creon in order to make certain that his action device worked. It was my opinion, one that was shared by many others, that the text wasn't always served by Haus's "physical confrontation" approach. It was a bold choice, one that stimulated discussion and provided a strong theatricality that the play requires. The flaws may have been less evident with more rehearsal. Everyone agreed on that.

July 23, 1988. Larnaca, Cyprus

The cast was a bit surprised to find that their last performance would be in the inner courtyard of a medieval fort overlooking the sea at Larnaca. The

structure, largely the workmanship of the Turks in the 15th and 16th centuries, also showed the contribution of the Venetians. Beneath the walls now showing were the ruins of Roman structures. The British had arrived at this site in the 19th century and used the facility as a prison for many years. This night a temporary stage about 3½ feet high, 40 feet wide and 14 feet deep occupied the south side of the courtyard and 400 chairs faced it 125 of which were occupied for the performance.

The space was much shallower than any of the stages used earlier in the run, so the company took an hour and a half to readjust the blocking to suit the new circumstances. For the first time, there was some grumbling from the cast, but they all did the work that was necessary to make the adjustment. The performance went well.

During the day there were more comments about the nature of the work that they were doing. Others now noted that, although the physical work was interesting, innovative and challenging, it did not always fit the text. Earlier they had been so busy memorizing words and actions that they hadn't had time to fully appreciate what was happening to them and to the characters that they were playing. By the end of a week of performances they were beginning to look for texture.

Through that week the chorus work became more precise; the attacks and releases of choral speech were cleaner, the physical work better executed. The speech was cleaner, but it still wasn't very musical, pleasing to the ear. Anthony's dance work was a highlight of every performance, whether in the combat sequences or in his solo dance.

The characters central to the plot remained two-dimensional. Observers from Nicosia and elsewhere shared that opinion: Creon showed little thought processing, little of the clever politician, and David relied heavily upon his striking resemblance to Charlton Heston rather than developing subtle character strokes. Robin, they felt, played angrily but did not show other emotions fundamental to the character. Rarely did she show vulnerability. But there was much improvement during the week. Both the protagonist and the antagonist did better at communicating with the others on stage. But they still needed a broader range of tactics.

By the end of the run the voices were very tired. There hadn't been sufficient time for the actors to condition their voices to the rigors of outdoor performance. The schedule put them at a serious disadvantage and put a tremendous strain on their voices.

General Observations About the Process

It became clear to me once again that actors thrive on attention, not just the obvious kind from an audience, but more importantly, from the director. This company of young professionals suffered the long hours of rehearsal; the perils of foreign travel in lands and on seas filled with crazed and angry

terrorists who were killing people at random; "mystery" meat and other exotic foods; language barriers; and personal discomfort. They did so willingly and with virtually no complaining because they were working at their art, perfecting their craft, and they were getting immediate, intense feedback from their director and from their choreographer. One of those men would have been insufficient to the job under these demanding and unusual circumstances. They took turns shaping the work of the actors. There seemed to be an unspoken communication process at work between the German and Japanese collaborators; when Uwe Haus's energy flagged for a moment, Andrew Tsubaki stepped forward and did the work that needed doing. Uwe retrieved the reins when the occasion required him to do so. Nicos, often seeming to be more the dramaturg than a co-director, rarely worked directly with the actors, choosing rather to offer his remarks to Uwe, who relayed them to the cast. But the cast was getting the attention of three directors, each from a different culture, each who was born to a language different from their own. It was heady stuff.

There was an additional internal structure at work. Eliza Hurt had been Uwe's principal contact person in the U.S. It was she who helped to find replacement actors for those who were unable or unwilling to continue in the roles that they had taken in 1987. So she had a leadership role among the actors and represented "management" to them before they departed for Cyprus. She had also contributed to the musical components of the production, knew the music and choreography better than the others, and almost always spoke the first syllable of choral speeches. I frequently wondered if, as Chorus Leader, she was doing this on the orders of the director, as an artistic choice, or if it was her way of prompting others. I felt that it may have been an administrative intrusion into the way that the chorus performed.

There were several people in this tight little group who probed, prodded, encouraged, and shaped the work of the others. The actors thrived on the attention. They trusted each other, their directors, their hosts and hostesses, and the system in which they found themselves. And they trusted their own capabilities, their own training. They trusted all of these things because they were getting what they needed from them. At least until the end of the tour.

Volumes could be written about inadequate planning, missed appointments, unreasonable expectations, forgotten promises, but the idea worked. It worked for the audiences, for the network of enthusiastic Cypriots who aided at every turn of the way, for the actors, and for the community of artists who brought it together.

It may be that the "crisis management" approach to this project kept the company hanging together. There was hardly a moment when the whole thing didn't appear to be on the verge of flying asunder. But the crises were managed, everyone's problems resolved (for the moment), and life in the fast lane continued.

In all fairness, "crisis" may be an overstatement. Problems of niggling dimension occurred more often than people in either educational or

professional theatre would comfortably tolerate. They were often due to an absence of careful planning and sufficient follow-through. Since Nicos Shiafkalis was the only company leader on Cyprus (Uwe Haus at home in East Berlin, G.D.R., or traveling in the U.S. or Europe; Andrew Tsubaki in Mid-America or workshoping the four corners of the earth), the team tended to improvise. There was little significant written communication, infrequent telephone conversation, and insufficient on-site planning immediately before the arrival of the company. The actors who had been with the company in 1987 grumbled occasionally that things were not as well put together as they had been in their earlier experience.

The premise on which the company came together was fraught with uncertainty. There was not enough money; actors came without knowing exactly what they could expect by way of compensation; vague assurances regarding travel monies created morale problems and a few financial crises for the actors. They all got hotel accommodations, a continental breakfast, and split the box office proceeds. It seemed to me unlikely that any of the actors was able to do more than pay daily expenses; travel to and from Cyprus was only partially compensated.

I had the sense that many if not all of the actors were in Cyprus for more than The International Theatre Workshop. They were there to act, to work hard, but they came to Cyprus because they wanted to be in Europe for a few days, weeks, or months following their commitment to *Antigone*. Aesthetic motivation was ancillary. One actor had his eyes set on Spain, another on Italy, others on England and France, some were headed for Greece and the islands. Cyprus was a stepping-stone. But it was an experience that none will forget.

Glenn Q. Pierce
University of Kansas

Definitive reasons to join.

lib'rarĭ, n. Room or building containing books for reading or reference; room in large house devoted to books; collection of books for use by the public, some part of it, or members of some society, public institution charged with care of such collection, (*lending* ~, from which books may be taken away with or without payment; *reference* ~, in which books may be consulted; [ME, f. OF *librairie* f. L *librarius*, -a (a. & n.) f. *liber* book; see -ARY¹, -Y¹]

ēdūcā'tion, n. Bringing up (of the young); systematic instruction; course of this, as *classical*, *commercial*, *art*, ~; development of character or mental powers: *training*. Hence ~ AL a., ~(al) IST(3) nn., ~ ALLY³ adv., (-shon-). [f. F, or L *educatio* (as prec., see -ATION)]

informā'tion, n, Informing, telling; thing told, knowledge, items of knowledge, news, (*on*, *about*); (Law) charge, complaint, lodged with (against) ~ AL a. [ME, f

BRITISH THEATRE

A S S O C I A T I O N

REGENT'S COLLEGE, INNER CIRCLE, REGENT'S PARK, LONDON NW1 4NW

TELEPHONE 01-935 2571



Humbert Allen Astredo (left) as the Russian negotiator and Hamilton Gillett (right) as the American in Lee Blessing's *A Walk in the Woods*, which opened the Fifteenth Anniversary Season at Portland Stage Company. David A. Rodgers, photo.

A WALK IN THE WOODS. By Lee Blessing. Portland Stage Company, Portland, Maine. November 1-November 20.

Blessing's play received critical acclaim as well as a Tony nomination for Best Play when it was performed on Broadway with Robert Prosky and Sam Waterston. Because of its timely theme, it will undoubtedly be performed in numerous regional theatres this year. The Portland Stage Company has given the play a simple, yet elegant staging as the opening performance of the season.

The play was inspired by the walk in the Geneva woods taken by American and Soviet negotiators Paul Nitze and Yuli Kvitsinsky during the course of arms control talks. In this imaginary reconstruction of the event, two American negotiators meet throughout the course of a year during which they argue, chase a rabbit, explore their situation, and generally get to know each other. The playwright writes striking dialogue showing the genuine anguish of the sensitive government representative caught in a web of pretense and falsehood, but he also weaves comic effects throughout the play.

Beyond the simple story of two negotiators representing "enemy" nations, is an examination of the complexities of language and the nature of reality and illusion which have become so much a part of twentieth century drama. (The Russian remarks that as nobody wants peace, they are engaged in "the quest for the appearance of the quest for peace.") Initially the Russian taunts the American because he only speaks *one* language. Irritated by the continually serious stance of the American, he asks him to talk frivolously. "Frivolously?" responds the other, "What do you mean?" "It's *your* language," replies the delighted Russian, proceeding to offer dictionary definitions of "frivolous" to the baffled American. The false and overblown attitudes which accrue to words such as "detente," "nuclear freeze," and other symbolic words drive the Russian into a mental state of darkness in which the world seems to recede into the distance while negotiators endlessly exchange these words. Even the final scene of friendship between the two characters involves an argument over words. The play ends with the two of them sitting on the bench, having accomplished nothing in the large scale, but having wrought a friendship which offers some glimmer of hope in the playwright's dark, even cynical, view of superpower negotiations.

As Botvinnik, Humbert Allen Astredo dominated the early scenes of the play. He was convincingly Russian, and capable of getting all the power and fun out of the role. Lolling on the bench, agreeing with the American's

proposal that they should not try to be friends "because I want to be your friend," carefully tearing a stick of gum in half to share with the American, he genuinely delighted the audience throughout the play. As Honeyman, Hamilton Gillett had the less flashy role, but conveyed a clear sense of the earnest, idealistic American. In the final scene when he broke through his mask of polite behavior to discuss a ridiculous incident caused by his inability to understand French or German, he was extremely effective.

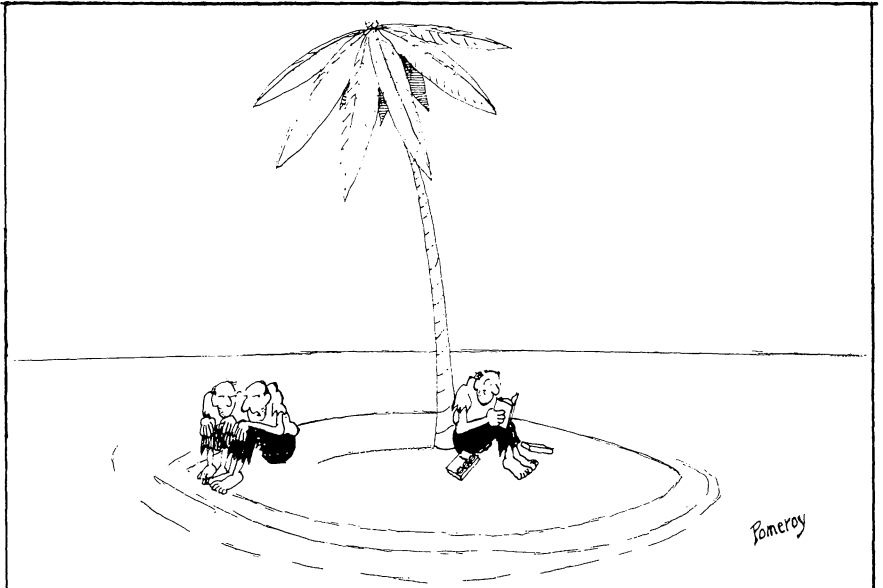
As indicated above, the setting, by Derek McLane, was very simple, but interesting. A raked stage set in space and covered with bark was backed by actual trees of which we saw only the tall trunks. The lighting and backdrops conveyed the change of the four seasons. The bench in the center was the only stage furnishing, but the actors, under the direction of Paul Moser, used it well, and there was never any sense of monotony in the setting or the play.

Watching the play I was pleased with the acting and the dialogue, but about half way through I was reminded of Tallulah Bankhead's famous quip "There's less here than meets the eye." Certainly compared to some of the other rich dramatic feasts coming up this season, this is a spare dramatic event. But the playwright has demonstrated that he is capable of treating a serious theme with passion and genuine wit--not one-liners--that he can create memorable characters, and that he is adept at playing with language and utilizing it fully for dramatic effect. Blessing has participated in three O'Neill National Playwrights Conferences and has several plays opening in the near future. His play *Cobb* will premiere, as this did, at Yale Repertory under the direction of Lloyd Richards. It will be interesting to see how far Blessing can develop his gifts, which show very well in this play.

Yvonne Shafer
University of Southern Maine



Humbert Allen Astredo (right) as the Soviet diplomat and Hamilton Gillett as the American in Lee Blessing's *A Walk in the Woods*. David Rodgers, photo.



Ça lui est égal...il a les numéros
les plus récents de *SOUNDINGS*.

For that unexpected layover, or *n'importe quelle autre occasion inattendue*, deconstructionists are finding out what smart academic travellers have always known.

For twenty years, *SOUNDINGS* has set the standard among the quarterlies for rigor and adventure in arts, letters, women's studies, religion and theology, technology and culture, ethics in the professions, war and peace, and American culture.

Plus ça change, plus c'est la même chose.



U.S. Annual Subscription Rates: Individual, \$15; Institutional, \$24. Single Copy, \$5.

For further information or a subscription write Ralph V. Norman, Editor, *SOUNDINGS*, 306 Alumni Hall, The University of Tennessee, Knoxville, TN 37996-0530

See our journal displayed at the Scholars Press Combined Exhibit during the conference.

1000 AIRPLANES ON THE ROOF. By Philip Glass, David Henry Hwang, and Jerome Sirlin.

Minimalism reaches its maximum theatrical potential in *1000 Airplanes on the Roof*, a "science fiction music-drama" created by composer Philip Glass, playwright David Henry Hwang and designer Jerome Sirlin. The sole character, M, played on alternate nights by Jodi Long and Patrick O'Connell (M was played by Mr. O'Connell at our performance) delivers a monologue in which he recounts his search for the truth of extra-terrestrial encounters through remembering sublimated experiences. The conflict for M, and the play, centers on M's recognition that if he admits the "truth" of his experiences with aliens, then he speaks heresy: "we are not alone," that is, Man is just another phenomenon, no greater nor lesser than anything else in the universe.

M begins his story by recounting a disastrous date with a woman he had hoped would be his girlfriend. During the evening, he falls victim to a violent flashback and when he returns home, his apartment building disappears. This forces him to piece together fragments of recollected sounds and images into a coherent picture of his life. The only explanation which makes sense of his memories is that aliens have periodically visited him. At this moment of recognition, he hears a sound like "a thousand airplanes on the roof"--they are back. He is taken aboard a spaceship, this time fully conscious, and placed on an examining table. A BB shaped globe is inserted up his nostril (an examining device) and he asks what is happening. He is then whisked on a journey across five dimensions, back into time and forward to the present. He eventually understands why the aliens travel: "We are all visitors; we all travel to find another life, a set of eyes into which we can look and see some part of themselves (sic)" (program synopsis). M, having found peace within himself, reconciled to his "privileged" status, is returned home only to have his body fail him. Waking up in a hospital, he denies his memories when questioned by doctors. Again, he begins to forget as he pretends to be "sane" in a world in which UFO abductions could never happen. Certified "sane," he runs from what he knows to be the truth of his memories, memories which, if acknowledged, would shatter the thin illusion of reality.

The triumph of the production lay in its overwhelming effect. The style of theatrical presentation complemented Glass's "minimalistic" music: arpeggios and rhythm, layered, repeated, then subtly altered, played on woodwinds, electric keyboards and a human voice as an instrument. Scrim,

a steep ramp and cut-outs, placed to create a feeling of a receding frame, gave every projection a three-dimensional quality. The images were sometimes incongruous, symbolic or realistic. The visual elements illustrated and supported Glass's score in its appeal to the unconscious. The music itself dulled the conscious mind, accustomed to melody or lyrics through an almost hypnotic, mantra-like repetition. When the music stopped, there was an emotional release. Consciousness recovered and seemed to ask, "Where have I been?" By reducing ego-dominance, the play attempted to work directly on the unconscious. It was in the unconscious, after all, where M stored his feelings and memories until they became conscious.

The images and sounds in *1000 Airplanes on the Roof* fused into a meditation on M's predicament. The sight of M stepping from skyscraper to skyscraper, or sitting on the steps of his apartment building or appearing encapsulated by his thinking, was riveting. The visual effect of projected scenery and images reinforced the emotional tones of the music and the narrative. The series of projections created its own logic as the images flowed into one another in concert with the unrelenting rhythms of the score and the depictions of M's mental and physical locations.

The play, however, suffered from an imbalance between the narrative, music and the visual. The spoken text tried to communicate in a linear fashion and seemed out of place in the non-linear atmosphere and logic created by the music and projections. Hwang somehow missed the boat while working with his partners. M related his experiences to the audience instead of experiencing his discoveries and insights for the first time. While the music and images happened, M's story had already happened. Since the "story" was over before the play began, it became impossible to empathize *with* M; the spectators only sympathized *for* M. Furthermore, Hwang's text seemed like a generic "UFO abduction" story: borrowing bits and pieces from material like the 1975 movie "The UFO Incident," Kurt Vonnegut's *Slaughterhouse Five* and the UFO accounts found in supermarket tabloids. Hwang broke no new ground nor explored any fresh aspect of the UFO phenomenon.

Glass ironically confused the focus of the play when he said the play is just as much about memories as about UFOs. In a radio interview on WBEZ, Chicago's public radio station, Glass discussed people who have had such experiences and who confided that they would be considered "crazy" if they openly talked about them. For Glass, the more interesting aspect of the phenomenon was the repression of feelings and memories, i.e. the tension between the conscious and the unconscious. The tension between the conscious and unconscious is precisely what Hwang avoided in the text. Hwang wanted to persuade the audience to believe M's story, whereas Glass and Sirlin want the audience to experience M's story. Hwang, working in opposition to his partners, failed to render the struggle in anything but clichés and stereotypical attitudes against Western rationalism ("Man is the measure of all things").

Philip Glass directed and the performance was given at Centre East, Skokie, IL on October 4, as part of a 35-city tour. The Philip Glass Ensemble, in view throughout the performance, played the nearly continuous score while M moved in and out of over 200 projected images. The performance lasted approximately 90 minutes with no intermission. Theatrically, *1000 Airplanes on the Roof* fascinated and, at times, overwhelmed the audience through its sounds and images, but dramatically, the plot was grade-B science fiction at best.

Robert M. Kosson
Northwestern University

THE SOCIETY FOR THEATRE RESEARCH

offers a service and a meeting-place for all those who are interested in the history of the British theatre. The emphasis of its work is on performance in the theatre, and is therefore complementary to that of dramatic theory and criticism.

The Society publishes a journal, *Theatre Notebook*, three times a year. Recent articles have included, for instance, "Art and Eighteenth-Century Acting Style", "Komisarjevsky's *Three Sisters*: the Prompt Book", and "The National Theatre's Production of *The Mysteries*".

The Society publishes up to two full-length books each year, which are sent without further charge to members. Recent titles have included, for example, a new edition of *Roscius Anglicanus* edited by Judith Milhous and Robert D. Hume, *The Eighteenth-Century Pleasure Gardens of Marylebone* by Mollie Sands, and *The Arts Theatre London 1927-1981* by Wendy and J.C. Trewin.

Subscription to the Society for overseas members is as follows:

Individual members (full rate)	\$35.00
Individual members (if paid before 31 December) ...	\$26.25
Corporate and institutional members (with 2 copies of <i>Theatre Notebook</i>)	\$45.00
Student members	\$15.00

Further details may be obtained from, and application for membership addressed to:

The Society for Theatre Research
c/o The Theatre Museum
1e Tavistock Street
Covent Garden
London WC2E 7PA

Special Supplement: Theatre Historiography

ANNOUNCING: A new journal
devoted to the young scholar...

Theatre **IN** Sight

A JOURNAL of CONTEMPORARY PERFORMANCE THOUGHT

Theatre *Insight* is a new journal specializing in theatre criticism, history, and performance written by graduate students, junior faculty members and other theatre professionals. By creating a new outlet for experimentation in theatre writing, we hope to encourage submissions by those who normally do not have an opportunity to publish. Founding editors: Michael Barnes, Lurana Donnels O'Malley, Jamie Smith and William Stotts.

Read the work of emerging scholars--those who will lead us into the next century. Receive three theme-oriented issues that deal with the pertinent concerns of our time. Subscriptions to *Theatre Insight* are available at \$10 for three issues and an index. Individual issues are priced at \$5. Subscriptions for libraries and institutions are \$15. Send check or money order to:

Theatre Insight Associates
Winship Drama Building
Austin, Texas 78712

NOTE: All subscriptions begin with the first issue of each volume year.

CALL for PAPERS

Theatre Insight seeks new critical and historical articles, book reviews and production analyses from the young scholar. Work is especially sought from those who are currently involved in production as actors, directors, dramaturgs or designers.

Each issue of **Theatre Insight** will focus on one topic which will inform the choice of articles, as well as the books and productions reviewed. Articles should be approximately 10 pages and reviews should be 500 words. Please submit all writing in the most recent MLA format (endnotes or parenthetical documentation) with a self-addressed, stamped envelope. Disks are welcome, using MacWrite or MS Word programs on Macintosh. Original black and white photos or illustrations are encouraged with prior permission of the artist.

issue #3: classics declassified

submissions deadline : june 1, 1989
Re-evaluating and de-mythologizing famous works from the
modern dramatic canon.

Sought: articles on new approaches to "classic" texts, from Aeschylus to Shepard, deconstructive strategies for standard works, current artists who approach the classics, adaptation, the problem of translation, copyright laws and their effect on the creative process, the value of traditional modes, alienation effects, dramaturgy and the classics, canonicity, new historicism. . .