

THEATRE, COMMUNICATION & DEVELOPMENT

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Introduction

Theatre-one of the foremost means used by man to communicate. Ancient man has been known to communicate by means of drawings and symbols. They mostly understood each other by seeing the symbols they left. And that is how the idea of storytelling first evolved. Theatre has been the channel of all forms of communication. Issues ranging from political, social, contemporary, have all found their expression through theatre.

Origin

The origin of theatre is now lost in the pages of history. Drama dance music all the major forms of informal communication known to mankind have been developed from theatre. Aristotle suggested that mimesis (imitation) is innate in humans; theatre probably came from the dithyramb, a hymn sung or chanted before religious rituals in honor of Dionysus, the god of wine, rebirth, and fertility. The word "tragedy" seems to have come from the Greek words for "goat" and "song"--so tragedy was a goat-song (whether sung to, by, or for the goat is anyone's guess).

Theatre emerged from myth, ritual, and ceremony. Early societies perceived connections between certain actions performed by the group or leaders in the group and the desired results of the whole society. These actions moved from habit, to tradition, and then on to ceremony and ritual. The formulation of these actions, and the consequent repetition and rehearsal, broke the ground for theatre. These rituals are accompanied by myths. The myths enter the storytelling tradition, gaining a life beyond the original rites. This new life allows the myths to move towards entertainment and the esthetic. These stories now are performed for their own sake and move towards theatre. Through these rituals, leaders, or actors of sorts, emerged. These acting/leadership roles were often filled by elders and priests. In addition, the beginnings of acting spaces or auditoriums developed as a result of more elaborate rituals.

The earliest example of ceremony and ritual evolving towards theatre comes from ancient Egypt. "Pyramid texts" dating from 2800 to 2400 B.C., contain dramas sending the dead pharaoh off to the underworld. These dramas also the continuity of life and the pharaoh's power. There is also the Memphite Drama, recounting the story of the death and resurrection of the god Osiris, and the coronation of his son Horus. The most important Egyptian drama, though, was the Abydos passion play. Like the Memphite drama, the Abydos passion play concerns the story of Osiris. The paramount Egyptian myth, this drama was enacted at the most sacred place in Egypt, Abydos- the burial site of Osiris. .Performed annually from 2500 to 550 B.C. and full of spectacle, this passion play is the first of its kind ever recorded and is the first example of theatre.

Development of Theatre

The terminology 'theater', meaning 'a place for viewing', originated in Ancient Greece some 5000 years back. Since its inception, theater has taken many forms that involve dance, gestures, and pantomime combined with various other performing arts to portray a single artistic form. The first play staged in Athens was centered on the protagonist of the play 'The Persians', which was first performed in 472 B.C.

Italian Drama in the 18th Century- The 17th century marked a time of political and military strife. A change took place with the emergence of the 18th century which has been discussed in detail. British musical theater existed in the 20th century. This is an informative resource on British musical theater discussing great play writers like Gilbert and Sullivan.

A Study Analyzes Science Fiction in Spanish Theater- Science fiction was taken as basis of Spanish theater in the 20th century. The study by Universidad Carlos III de Madrid (UC3M) researcher concentrates on the presence of this genre. Theater in France 1500 to 1700- Prior to 1567, theater was only meant for aristocrat and wasn't found of much interest. Though after this period the situation changed and a number of companies came up that shaped the present day French theater.

A historical perspective has been presented on performing arts in Asia. Youth for Asian theater is a San-Francisco based organization, which promotes Asian heritage through its theater works focusing youth issues. Kabuki, Japanese Puppet Theater and other forms of performing arts are found in Japan. East Asian nations like China, Korea and Japan also had prevalence of theater.

American Theater Organ Society-Robert Hope-Jones created a whole new system of theater organ with a new electrical control system. The contemporary American theater festival is playing a major role in putting West Virginia on a national stage.

The Theater today has immensely changed from what it was hundreds of years back. The different types of stages used for performances in modern day.

Development and Theatre

'Development' is one term that has become very difficult to define. The various attempts at defining the concept have left the definers at the door step of subjectivity and or political and ideological coloration. While some see development as a state or condition that is static, others see it as process or course of change. Economists, politicians and others freely use the term especially when discussion borders on state of growth of a given society, place or thing. The term which is somewhat closely bound with the evolution of capitalism and the demise of feudalism has many meanings such as there are numerous clashing perspectives, theories and deep differences of opinion. But broadly speaking, development represents ideas and practices designed to bring about positive change in human societies.

Theatre and development have come a long way. What was once a means of entertainment for most people have now become what people use to communicate with each other. Theatre today

is used by people for far more productive purposes than communication. We use theatre today as channel of propaganda and reach.

Theater in Japan (A Case Study)

Japanese theatre dates back to 1301. The initiative first taken to reach out to people in Japan was taken way before any of the other Asian states. Japan with their ability to reach out to people and make the initiatives by the priests.

Many theatre performers in Japan later converted themselves into priesthood. In 1519 they started writing books on theatre. By 1598-95 theatre in Japan reached a stage where it needed to be banned by the rulers. Such instances run deep and wide till 1634-1641.

Japan officially welcomed theater in 1645 with its first shrine. The first book on theatre was published by Japan in 1649. In 1668 Japan banned costumes and curtains in theatre. 1763 saw the first children's theatre in Japan.

It was not until 1954 that Japan received her first school of theatre. High school performances were a regular in Japan by 1967.

From 1992 to 1995 several instances of damage and destruction to theatrical construction in Japan has been recorded both by manual and natural causes. By 2003 Japan found a place in UNESCO.

Kagura, Giaku, Baguka, noh, Kiagen, Bunraku are some of the forms of theatre in Japan.

Japan is an excellent example of prosperity in recent days. As we have found in the above discussion Japanese theater was locked and stopped a lot of times. Power in Japan has always been afraid of facing the theatre. It has been banned and locked in several instances. Hence, several instances of banning down the theatre are seen.

Also these hindrances could not push back the forces of spirit in the Japanese. They kept their theatre alive and developed it through stages. Even today the Japanese are said to be expressing their views in many ways by means of theatre.

On many instances the theatrical personalities in Japan were

Theatre and Society

Development in society comes largely from theatre. A lot of societal norms and reforms come through theatre. The various vices of the society that can otherwise be not explicitly described are brought to the mass by means of theater. Thus theatre has boosted revolution against societal vices and have put forward many of the transformations that makes us what we r now.

Theatre today is mostly dying. Though the best part of theatre is that is still lives on with Shakespeare and other playwrights, it is losing its value in the process. Theatre today has been replaced a by a variety of other means of entertainment. The theatrical halls have been replaced by movie hall and better yet the internet has made everything available in the touch of a button. Also today the content of theatre has changed. What was basically used for Communication later became entertainment. When the means to entertainment changed theatre gradually became only a potent means to education of societal, political and any other kind of problems.

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