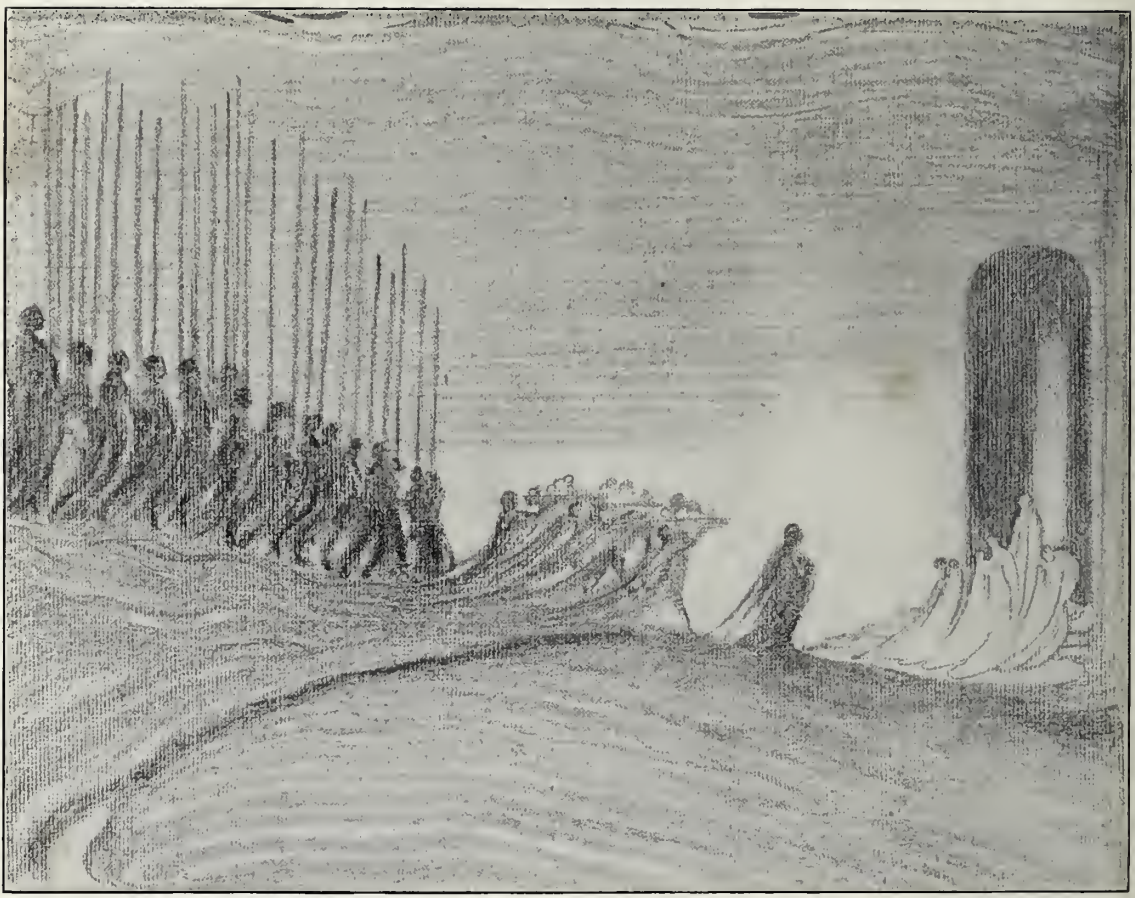
The Art of the Theatre

E. GORDON CRAIG

1905



A STUDY FOR A STAGE MOVEMENT — *Edward Gordon Craig*

THE ART OF THE THEATRE

TOGETHER WITH AN INTRODUCTION BY EDWARD GORDON CRAIG AND A PREFACE BY R. GRAHAM ROBERTSON

T. N. FOULIS
EDINBURGH & LONDON
1905

DEDICATED
TO MY OLD COMRADES OF
THE FUTURE

PREFACE BY R. GRAHAM ROBERTSON

SOME three years ago, a few performances of Handel's "Acis and Galatea" and Purcell's "Masque of Love" were given at the Great Queen's Street Theatre.

They were but little advertised and held the stage for but a short time, but those who found their way thither saw strange things.

Many who went to hear the familiar and ever welcome pastoral came away uncertain as to whether they had heard or seen "Acis and Galatea."

The music was given delightfully, but was only one delight among many—a part of a curiously complete, strangely harmonious whole.

Round it and out of it was woven an ever-shifting maze of colour, form, and motion, through which the music tripped daintily, more lovely than of old, and happy in its native land of Faerie.

"O, the Pleasure of the Plains!" sang the chorus, and the fierce mid-day light beat down, tempered softly by the draperies of the white tent under which they lay. Of scenery, in the ordinary sense, there was none; all was suggestion, but such skilful suggestion that into the cool, white shadow came the very heat and glare of mid-summer's meadows under a burning sun.

And among the drowsy nymphs and shepherds wandered a fantastic, childish figure, bearing many-coloured balls which hung suspended from a hoop, held

high above her head. And to each dreamer she gave of her wares, purple and green and red and blue—little bright dreams to be had for the asking—and she seemed to whisper to each, "What would you?" and one seemed to answer, "Mine shall be blue, full of blue night and the deep sea"; and another, "Green for me, a dream of green pastures and running streams"; and a third, "Mine be the red, a world of roses and of fire." And to each she seemed to smile and to say, "Here—catch!" and she snipped the thread and flicked the painted ball through the air to the dreamers, till the whole scene grew gay with colour and magical with the floating and tossing and whirling of the many-hued balls.

And here people said, "How silly. For these are air-balls, and children buy them for a penny at the gates of Kensington Gardens."

And truly it was very silly indeed, and, for that very reason, it was exactly right; for what can be sillier—or more charming—than the opening chorus of "Acis and Galatea" with its silly tinkle of sheep bells, its silly words and its wonderful picture of the silly Arcadians "sporting the hours away." It was silly. It was also curiously beautiful and imaginative.

The vision of the dream-seller may or may not have been thus named by its designer, but that is of little matter; for it is the particular property of true vision (which is the highest imagination) that to all

it means something and to no two people the same thing.

And so, through the setting forth of the story, song, action, and dance went hand in hand, none claiming the mastery, among a setting ever appropriate and suggestive; whether in the first great hint of Polyphemus when, in a dim wood of dark overhanging shade, one single fold of a vast purple mantle, sweeping down from the darkness, trailed heavily upon the ground; or when the monster himself became visible, a huge, brooding form upon a throne of heaped shadows, a haunting shape, never clearly seen, yet difficult to forget; or in the beautiful moment towards the close when, at the transformation of Acis into a Fountain, the flow of a running stream was so quaintly echoed in the bending, swaying forms, floating scarves, and waving arms of the chorus, that music and singers alike seemed to melt together and ripple in a silver flood round the feet of the new-born Water God.

Nor was the "Masque of Love," with its clear harmonies of white and ivory and faint yellow—so at one and of a part with the music—less striking in its completeness, its dainty directness of statement.

As in the Handel Cantata, neither the music, the dancing, nor the setting were first or last: each was for all; and for the actors it is the highest compliment to say that they were forgotten. Acis and Galatea loved and sported in the plains of Arcady, the Lover and the

Beloved met and parted in the Great White Chamber of Dreams, but names and personalities of to-day were lost.

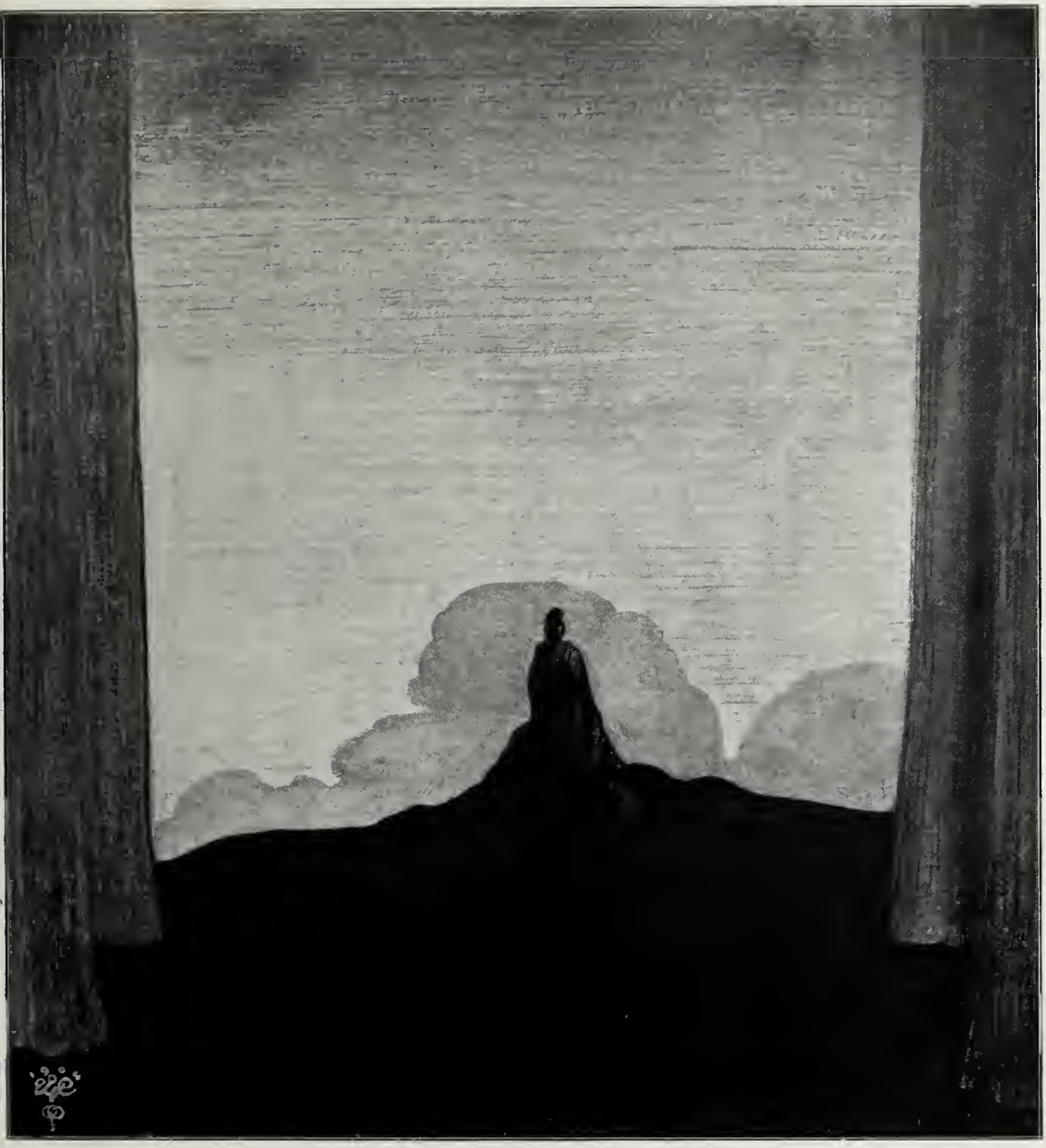
And here Mr Gordon Craig, the Deviser and Executor of these fair imaginings, had achieved his great object—that the Sister Arts of Music, Painting, and Pantomime should make up their little differences and cast away their jealousies, and, by a united effort, should create anew a Forgotten Art—the Art of the Theatre.

And to this idea he is ever faithful and has spoken for it again and again: in "Dido and Æneas," in the "Vikings" of Ibsen, and in the "Much Ado about Nothing" of Shakespeare.

Well equipped he comes to the task which he has set himself. Trained as an actor at the Lyceum Theatre, he has had ample opportunities for studying those beautiful productions by Henry Irving which, on their own lines, reached a perfection which could go no further; or—as has been seen since—when taken further, fared worse.

He is also a draughtsman of great charm and originality, and has lately developed in this direction to such effect that his pictures are of very considerable importance among the Art Work of the Day.

Many-sided, and on all sides artistic, he seeks for harmony and unity of purpose on the modern stage and does not find it.



A DESIGN FOR A SCENE FOR A PLAY BY SHAKESPEARE — *Edward Gordon Craig*

The elaborate scenery, admirably painted by an artist who has not seen the costumes for which it is the background, does not satisfy him; the rich robes, each beautiful in itself, but designed by one who has no voice whatever in their setting nor their placing upon the scene, give him no pleasure; and the actors, having no knowledge of the scenes or the costumes (that is, of the atmosphere of the play) until the last minute, seem to him to be at a disadvantage.

The solemn "scenery rehearsals," when a scene is set and lit and pronounced "all right," are strange to him because, as an artist, he knows that, if the scene is "all right" without figures, it must be all wrong. And he speaks to us of these things, and shows us his own Fancies, deftly woven out of colour and posture and sound. And we look at them and we rather like them, but, from mere force of habit, we cry, "Behold this Dreamer cometh! Come, therefore, let us fall upon him and slay him."

But now, when we thought of him as safely and inoffensively at the bottom of his pit, comes this Message out of the Land of Egypt where the interpretation of dreams is appreciated;—for history repeats itself.

INTRODUCTION

ONE WORD ABOUT THE THEATRE AS IT WAS, AS IT IS, AND AS IT WILL BE

TO tell you what the theatre was, is to tell you the history of the theatre.

This book is too short to go into the history of the theatre, but it is possible in a few words to say that history hints the first development of the theatre as being more complete than its last.

In its first development it was self-reliant.

The first sign we have of the art of the theatre is in the religious rites. All the arts which I wish to see back again in the theatre were brought together and focussed in the religious rites.

Then the poet, being by far the most intellectual of the people engaged in these rites, and the spoken word being as powerful, the spoken word and the poet gradually usurped all else. If anyone has studied the nature of the theatre, he sees that it must have been quite different from what it pretends to be to-day.

The theatre was for the people, and always should be for the people. The poets would make the theatre for a select community of dilettanti. They would put difficult psychological thoughts before the public expressed in difficult words, and would make for this public something which is impossible for them to understand, and unnecessary for them to know; whereas the theatre must show them sights, show them life, show them

beauty, and not speak in difficult sentences. And the reason why the theatre is being kept back to-day is because the poet is pulling one way, saying they should only be given words, using the theatre and all its crafts as a medium for those words; and the people are pulling the other way, saying they desire to see the sights, realistically or poetically shown, not turned into literature. So far most of the brainy people are on the side of the poets; they have got the upper hand. Still the plays in the theatres are, artistically, failures; the theatre itself is a failure artistically and commercially, and the secret of this failure is the battle between the poet and the people.

In order to get out of this fearful muddle and general misunderstanding, one has to look at the theatre as it is to-day, and then see what can be practically made out of this theatre which we have in our hands.

Only the men of the theatre can undertake this task. They will found the theatre of the very far future, not first by upsetting our old theatre, but by putting it as straight as is possible. All the people concerned to-day in the work of the theatre must train themselves patiently and continuously, remaining under the yoke until they have become better workers. Only those who have both the courage and capability to strike away from all this can take flight and show in flashes what the theatre is to be in the future.

Should one of these strike away with such excellent success that the others take fire from him, and follow him where he leads, such an event would bring about extraordinary results.

At present there is too much careless work in every department of the theatre, and even should one man fight free from the old theatre he cannot alone create a renaissance. Such an event develops only after many years of combined efforts. A Wagner, with a great idea, does not *make* the renaissance, he only points a way.

The theatre has been, and should be, a medium for artists—for one class of artists only, those of the theatre. By the means of this medium such men should be able to show us life in all its beautiful forms. The theatre should not be a place in which to exhibit scenery, in which to read poems, or preach sermons; it should be a place in which the entire beauty of life can be unfolded, and not only the external beauty of the world, but the inner beauty and meaning of life. It should not only be a place to show facts in a material way, but *the* place to show the whole world of fancy, and in a spiritual way. It seems inconceivable how the theatre has degenerated from this, its original intention. It should bring us inspiration and refreshment, in the same manner as a great book of poems brings us inspiration and refreshment, and remember that this theatre must make its appeal through our eyes.

For what reason did the Catholic Church raise

great cathedrals, fill them with wonderful pictures, golden images, strange lights, but to appeal to the eyes of the people. In order to reach the people the Catholic Church uses certain sounds, certain lights, as the symbols of certain things. The prayers themselves are but imperfectly heard, but they perfectly represent prayer.

The Catholic Church sets out to express mystery, and it achieves this in a very beautiful way; that it fails to express more is only because it limits itself as to what it shall express. On the other hand, the theatre, setting out to express everything from the grave to the gay, expresses nothing, and now has not even one touch of mystery left. It therefore fails entirely.

What would the theatre of the future be? We cannot go far wrong in saying that it will be something quite different from the theatre of to-day. Even the form of the building will probably be entirely changed; in fact, dare we not say that the modern theatre, in comparison with the theatre of the future, is as the mud-hut of the savage in comparison with the Parthenon. What the theatre of the immediate to-morrow may be, that too is a different thing from the theatre of the future.

I see a great building to seat many thousands of people. At one end rises a platform of heroic size on which figures of a heroic mould shall move. Scenes shall be such as the world shows us, not as our own particular little street shows us. The movements on these scenes shall be noble and great: all shall be illumined by a light

such as the spheres give us, not such as the footlights give us, but such as we dream of. Each thing done on the stage in this new world shall be significant, intentional; nothing shall be the result of chance, neither shall people have cause to exclaim, "How clever!" but only, "How beautiful."

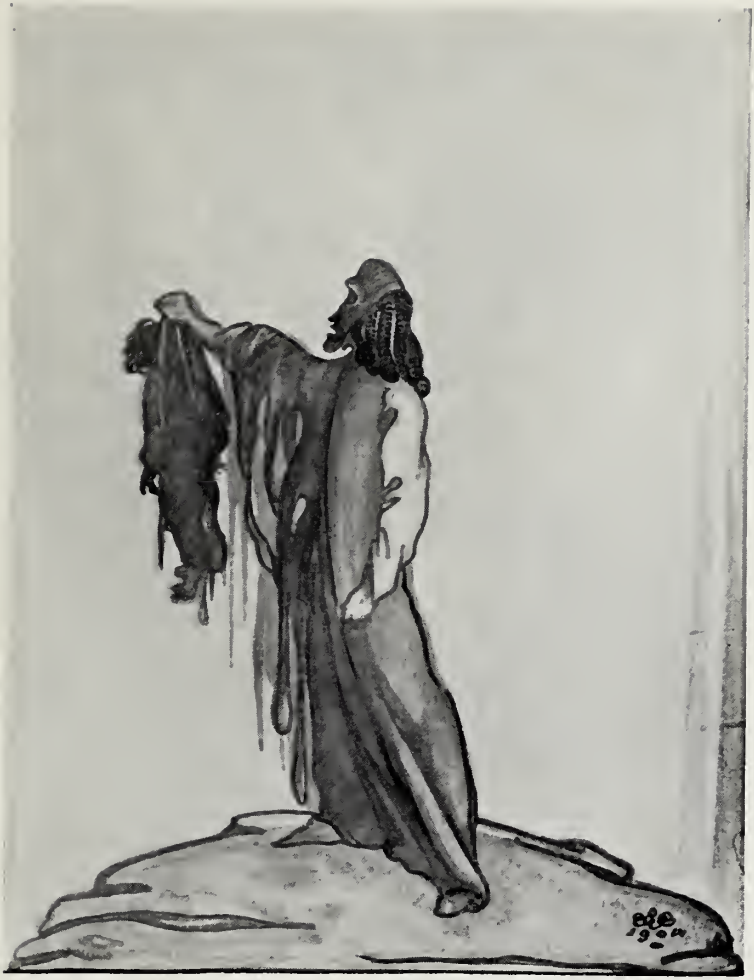
And if the words of poetry are not to be continually heard there, the spirit of poetry will be before us, and what is that but going back again five thousand years. In that there will be nothing new, but the old once more resumed.

In the old days there were two main divisions of architecture, the tomb and the temple—the one to contain life, the other to contain death. The theatre of the Future shall be the Temple of Life—the Temple of Beauty; and it shall be for the people.

Is anyone so foolish as to think I mean the theatre to be the place for the exhibition of real things? Surely no one confounds the realistic with life. Life is what I would bring into the theatre, not by means of live things, but by means of things that do not possess life until the artist has touched them, and thereby brought them to life.

Does anyone think scenery is interesting to me, or that costumes amuse me, or that I consider the wig-maker more important than the actor or vice versa? None of these things interest me in themselves, but only as material for me to invest with life by means of the art which may be in me. Air balloons are but

trifling things; still such trifles can be manipulated in the theatre so that they shall bring perfection. Wood, yards of silk, a bell, canvas, paints, and all the things used in the theatre—these, too, are but external trifles. They are so much litter until the brain begins to move them. Yet can all these things pulsate with life—even as dead words are made to live in the mouth of the poet? Does anyone think that I hold the scene, costumes, lights, or programme actors, of more importance than the play? The play is the idea, the rest only parts of the idea. The play is what the poet presents to the theatre to-day—the play (the idea) that is what we of the theatre will invent to-morrow. Is it possible then that we should think less of the play than of its parts? That we shall invent it to-morrow will be nothing new; it is what the men of the theatre began thousands of years ago. We shall not be repeating—we shall only resume.



"At the first note of music the curtain, which is a thing of shreds and patches, is rent in the middle, and a man with a hideous mask is seen standing on a little hillock of mud. He is breathing so heavily, one might almost say he snorts: the kind of noise a hull makes when his mate has been removed to the shambles. From his right arm hangs a little, dead boy, which he stretches out to the audience. He shows this figure to all, moving it from right to left and from left to right, and all the time the sound of restrained bellowing is heard. His movements are slow and deliberate—we think that all emotion and all life has gone from him as well as from the dead figure which he holds. From every side, and beneath him, come the many echoes of his solitary cry, and these echoes take new shapes, resolving into the words 'Pain . . . Pain . . . and Sorrow . . .' which float singing in the air, or roll like billows around his feet. Then a black rain commences to fall, very softly at first, then like a hailstorm, and finally becomes so swift and dense that the two figures are lost to sight and everything ceases—sound—vision and all."

FOR THE FIRST MOVEMENT IN THE PROLOGUE OF THE MASQUE OF "HUNGER" DESIGNED AND WRITTEN BY EDWARD GORDON CRAIG

THE ART OF THE THEATRE

AN EXPERT AND A PLAYGOER ARE CONVERSING

The Stage Director. You have now been over the theatre with me, and have seen its general construction, together with the stage, the machinery for manipulating the scenes, the apparatus for lighting, and the hundred other things, and have also heard what I have had to say of the theatre as a machine, let us rest here in the auditorium, and talk a while of the theatre and of its art. Tell me, do you know what is the Art of the Theatre?

The Playgoer. To me it seems that Acting is the Art of the Theatre.

The Stage Director. Is a part, then, equal to a whole?

The Playgoer. No, of course not. Do you then mean that the play is the Art of the Theatre?

The Stage Director. A play is a work of literature, is it not? Tell me, then, how one art can possibly be another?

The Playgoer. Well, then, if you tell me that the Art of the Theatre is neither the acting nor the play, then I must come to the conclusion that it is the scenery and the dancing. Yet I cannot think you will tell me this is so.

The Stage Director. No; the Art of the Theatre is neither acting nor the play, it is not scene nor dance, but

it consists of all the elements of which these things are composed: action, which is the very spirit of acting; words, which are the body of the play; line and colour, which are the very heart of the scene; rhythm, which is the very essence of dance.

The Playgoer. Action, words, line, colour, rhythm! And which of these is all-important to the art?

The Stage Director. One is no more important than the other, no more than one colour is more important to a painter than another, or one note more important than another to a musician. In one respect, perhaps, action is the most valuable part. Action bears the same relation to the Art of the Theatre as drawing does to painting, and melody does to music. The Art of the Theatre has sprung from action—movement—dance.

The Playgoer. I always was led to suppose that it had sprung from speech, and that the poet was the father of the theatre.

The Stage Director. This is the common belief, but consider it for a moment. The poet's imagination finds voice in words, beautifully chosen; he then either recites or sings these words to us, and all is done. That poetry, sung or recited, is for our ears, and, through them, for our imagination. It will not help the matter if the poet

shall add gesture to his recitation or to his song; in fact it will spoil all.

The Playgoer. Yes, that is clear to me. I quite understand that the addition of gesture to a perfect lyric poem can but produce an inharmonious result. But would you apply the same argument to dramatic poetry?

The Stage Director. Certainly I would. Remember I speak of a dramatic poem not of a drama. The two things are separate things. A dramatic poem is to be read. A drama is not to be read, but to be seen upon the stage. Therefore gesture is a necessity to a drama, and it is useless to a dramatic poem. It is absurd to talk of these two things, gesture and poetry, as having anything to do with one another. And now, just as you must not confound the dramatic poem with the drama, neither must you confound the dramatic poet with the dramatist. The first writes for the reader, or listener, the second writes for the audience of a theatre. Do you know who was the father of the dramatist?

The Playgoer. No, I do not know, but I suppose he was the dramatic poet.

The Stage Director. You are wrong. The father of the dramatist was the dancer. And now tell me from what material the dramatist made his first piece?

The Playgoer. I suppose he used words in the same way as the lyric poet.

The Stage Director. Again you are wrong, and that is what everyone else supposes who has not learnt the nature of dramatic art. No; the dramatist made his first piece by using action, words, line, colour, and rhythm, and making his appeal to our eyes and ears by a dexterous use of these five factors.

The Playgoer. And what is the difference between this work of the first dramatists and that of the modern dramatists?

The Stage Director. The first dramatists were children of the theatre. The modern dramatists are not. The first dramatist understood what the modern dramatist does not yet understand. He knew that when he and his fellows appeared in front of them the audience would be more eager to *see* what he would *do* than to *hear* what he might *say*. He knew that the eye is more swiftly and powerfully appealed to than any other sense; that it is without question the keenest sense of the body of man. The first thing which he encountered on appearing before them was many pairs of eyes, eager and hungry. Even the men and women sitting so far from him that they would not always be able to hear what he might say, seemed quite close to him by reason of the piercing keenness of their questioning eyes. To

these, and all, he spoke either in poetry or prose, but always in action: in poetic action which is dance, or in prose action which is gesture.

The Playgoer. I am very interested, go on, go on.

The Stage Director. No—rather let us pull up and examine our ground. I have said that the first dramatist was the dancer's son, that is to say, the child of the theatre, not the child of the poet. And I have just said that the modern dramatic poet is the child of the poet, and knows only how to reach the ears of his listeners, nothing else. And yet in spite of this does not the modern audience still go to the theatre as of old to see things, and not to hear things? Indeed, modern audiences insist on looking and having their eyes satisfied in spite of the call from the poet that they shall use their ears only. And now do not misunderstand me. I am not saying or hinting that the poet is a bad writer of plays, or that he has a bad influence upon the theatre. I only wish you to understand that the poet is not of the theatre, has never come from the theatre, and cannot be of the theatre, and that only the dramatist among writers has any birth-claim to the theatre—and that a very slight one. But to continue. My point is this, that the people still flock to *see*, not to hear, plays. But what does that prove? Only that the audiences have not altered. They are there with their thousand

pairs of eyes, just the same as of old. And this is all the more extraordinary because the playwrights and the plays have altered. No longer is a play a balance of actions, words, dance, and scene, but it is either all words or all scene. Shakespeare's plays, for instance, are a very different thing to the less modern miracle and mystery plays which were made entirely for the theatre. "Hamlet" has not the nature of a stage representation. "Hamlet" and the other plays of Shakespeare have so vast and so complete a form when read, that they can but lose heavily when presented to us after having undergone stage treatment. That they were acted in Shakespeare's day proves nothing. I will tell you, on the other hand, what at that period was made for the theatre—the Masques—the Pageants—these were light and beautiful examples of the Art of the Theatre. Had the plays been made to be seen, we should find them incomplete when we read them. Now, no one will say that they find "Hamlet" dull or incomplete when they read it, yet there are many who will feel sorry after witnessing a performance of the play, saying, "No, that is not Shakespeare's 'Hamlet.'" When no further addition can be made so as to better a work of art, it can be spoken of as "finished"—it is complete. "Hamlet" was finished—was complete—when Shakespeare wrote the last word of his blank

verse, and for us to add to it by gesture, scene, costume, or dance, is to hint that it is incomplete and needs these additions.

The Playgoer. Then do you mean to say "Hamlet" should never be performed?

The Stage Director. To what purpose would it be if I replied "Yes"? "Hamlet" will go on being performed for some time yet, and the duty of the interpreters is to put their best work at its service. But, as I have said, the theatre must not forever rely upon having a play to perform, but must in time perform pieces of its own art.

The Playgoer. And a piece for the theatre, is that then incomplete when printed in a book or recited?

The Stage Director. Yes—and incomplete anywhere except on the boards of a theatre. It must needs be unsatisfying, artless, when read or merely heard, because it is incomplete without its action, its colour, its line and its rhythm in movement and in scene.

The Playgoer. This interests me, but it dazzles me at the same time.

The Stage Director. Is that perhaps because it is a little new. Tell me what it is especially that dazzles you.

The Playgoer. Well, first of all, the fact that I

have never stopped to consider of what the art of the theatre consisted—to many of us it is just an amusement.

The Stage Director. And to you?

The Playgoer. Oh, to me it has always been a fascination, half amusement and half intellectual exercise. The show has always amused me; the playing of the players has often instructed me.

The Stage Director. In fact, a sort of incomplete satisfaction. That is the natural result of seeing and hearing something imperfect.

The Playgoer. But I have seen some few plays which seemed to satisfy me.

The Stage Director. If you have been entirely satisfied by something obviously mediocre, may it not be that you were searching for something less than mediocre, and you found that which was just a little better than you expected. Some people go to the theatre, nowadays, expecting to be bored. This is natural, for they have been taught to look for tiresome things. When you tell me you have been satisfied at a modern theatre, you prove that it is not only the art which has degenerated, but that a proportion of the audience has degenerated also. But do not let this depress you. I once knew a man whose life was so occupied, he never heard music other than that of

A DESIGN FOR A SCENE FOR A PLAY BY SHAKESPEARE — *Edward Gordon Craig*

the street organ. It was to him the ideal of what music should be. Still, as you know, there is better music in the world—in fact, barrel-organ music is very bad music; and if you were for once to see an actual piece of theatrical art, you would never again tolerate what is to-day being thrust upon you in place of theatrical art. The reason why you are not given a work of art on the stage is not because the public does not want it, not because there are not excellent craftsmen in the theatre who could prepare it for you, but because the theatre lacks the artist—the artist of the theatre, mind you, not the painter, poet, musician. The many excellent craftsmen whom I have mentioned are, all of them, more or less helpless to change the situation. They are forced to supply what the managers of the theatre demand, but they do so most unwillingly. The advent of the artist in the theatre world will change all this. He will slowly but surely gather around him these better craftsmen of whom I speak, and together they will give new life to the art of the theatre.

The Playgoer. But for the others?

The Stage Director. The others? The modern theatre is full of these others, these untrained and untalented craftsmen. But I will say one thing for them. I believe they are unconscious of their inability. It is not ignorance on their part, it is innocence. Yet

if these same men once realised that they were craftsmen, and would train as such—I do not speak only of the stage carpenters, electricians, wigmakers, costumiers, scene-painters, and actors (indeed, these are in many ways the best and most willing craftsmen) —I speak chiefly of the stage director. If the stage director was to technically train himself for his task of interpreting the plays of the dramatist—in time, and by a gradual development he would again recover the ground lost to the theatre, and finally would restore the Art of the Theatre to its home by means of his own creative genius.

The Playgoer. Then you place the stage director before the actors?

The Stage Director. Yes; the relation of the stage director to the actor is precisely the same as that of the conductor to his orchestra, or of the publisher to his printer.

The Playgoer. And you consider that the stage director is a craftsman and not an artist?

The Stage Director. When he interprets the plays of the dramatist by means of his actors, his scene-painters, and his other craftsmen, then he is a craftsman—a master craftsman; when he will have mastered the uses of actions, words, line, colour, and rhythm, then he may become an artist. Then we shall no longer

need the assistance of the playwright—for our art will then be self-reliant.

The Playgoer. Is your belief in a Renaissance of the art based on your belief in the Renaissance of the stage director?

The Stage Director. Yes, certainly, most certainly. Did you for an instant think that I have a contempt for the stage director? Rather have I a contempt for any man who fails in the whole duty of the stage director.

The Playgoer. What are his duties?

The Stage Director. What is his craft? I will tell you. His work as interpreter of the play of the dramatist is something like this: he takes the copy of the play from the hands of the dramatist and promises faithfully to interpret it as indicated in the text (remember I am speaking only of the very best of stage directors). He then reads the play, and during the first reading the entire colour, tone, movement, and rhythm that the work must assume comes clearly before him. As for the stage directions, descriptions of the scenes, etc., with which the author may interlard his copy, these are not to be considered by him, for if he is master of his craft he can learn nothing from them.

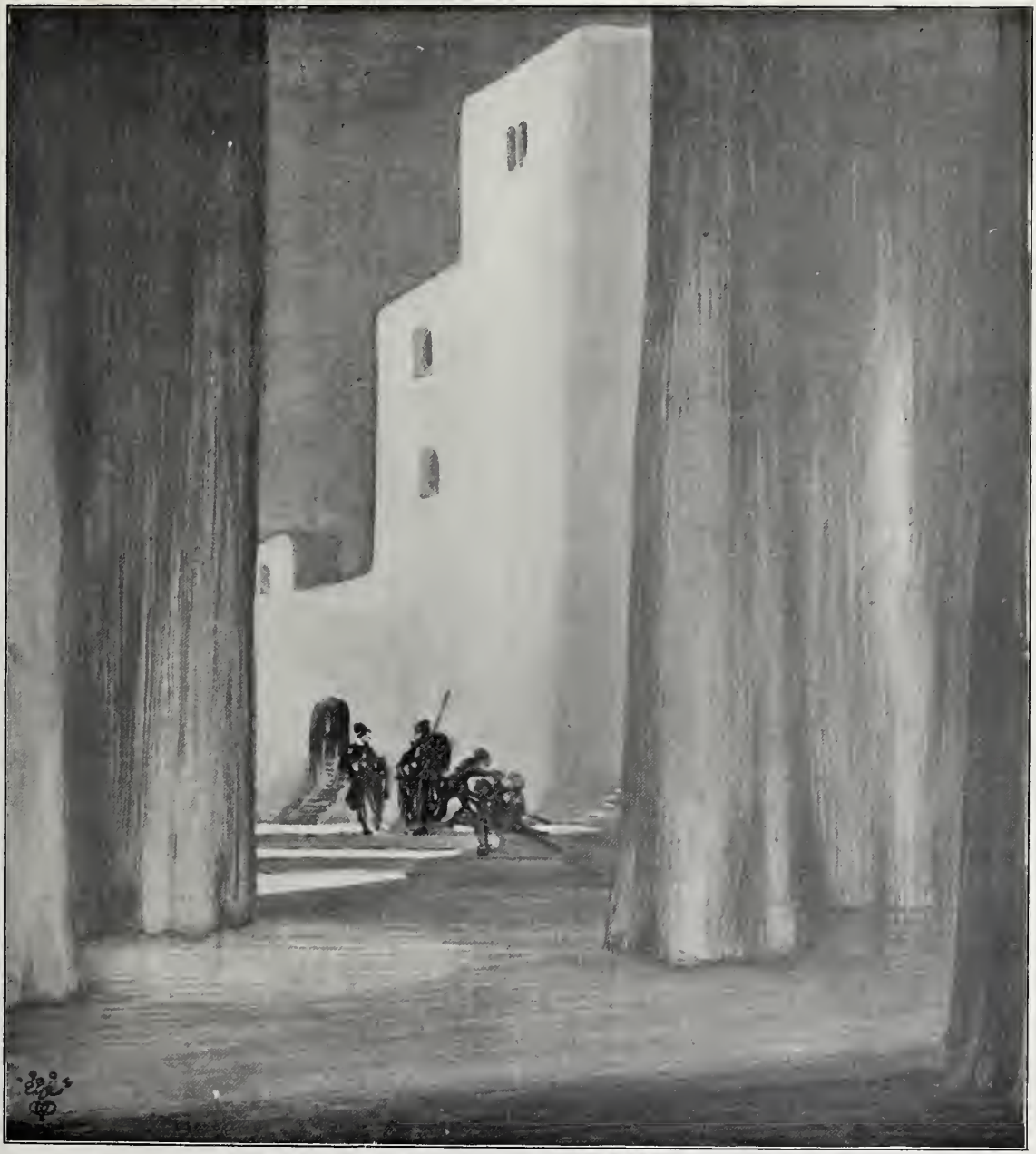
The Playgoer. I do not quite understand you. Do you mean that when a playwright has taken the trouble to describe the scene in which his men and women are

to move and talk, that the stage director is to take no notice of such directions—in fact to disregard them?

The Stage Director. It makes no difference whether he regards or disregards them. What he must see to is that he makes his action and scene match the verse or the prose, the beauty of it, the sense of it. Whatever picture the dramatist may wish us to know of, he will describe his scene during the progress of the conversation between the characters. Take, for instance, the first scene in "Hamlet." It begins:—

Ber. Who's there?
Fran. Nay, answer me; stand and unfold yourself.
Ber. Long live the king!
Fran. Bernardo?
Ber. He.
Fran. You come most carefully upon your hour.
Ber. 'Tis now struck twelve; get thee to bed, Francisco.
Fran. For this relief much thanks, 'tis bitter cold,
And I am sick at heart.
Ber. Have you had quiet guard?
Fran. Not a mouse stirring.
Ber. Well, goodnight.
If you do meet Horatio and Marcellus,
The rivals of my watch, bid them make haste.

That is enough to guide the stage director. He gathers from it that it is twelve o'clock at night, that it is in the open air, that the guard of some castle is being changed, that it is very cold, very quiet, and very dark.



A DESIGN FOR A SCENE FOR A PLAY BY SHAKESPEARE — *Edward Gordon Craig*

Any additional "stage directions" by the dramatist are trivialities.

The Playgoer. Then you do not think that an author should write any stage directions whatever, and you seem to consider it an offence on his part if he does so?

The Stage Director. Well, is it not an offence to the men of the theatre?

The Playgoer. In what way?

The Stage Director. First tell me the greatest offence an actor can give to a dramatist.

The Playgoer. To play his part badly?

The Stage Director. No, that may merely prove the actor to be a bad craftsman.

The Playgoer. Tell me, then.

The Stage Director. The greatest offence an actor can give to a dramatist is to cut out words or lines in his play, or to insert what is known as a "gag." It is an offence to poach on what is the sole property of the playwright. It is not usual to "gag" in Shakespeare, and when it is done it does not go uncensured.

The Playgoer. But what has this to do with the stage directions of the playwright, and in what way does the playwright offend the theatre when he dictates these stage directions?

The Stage Director. He offends in that he poaches

on their preserves. If to gag or cut the poet's lines is an offence, so is it an offence to tamper with the art of the stage director.

The Playgoer. Then is all the stage direction of the world's plays worthless?

The Stage Director. Not to the reader, but to the stage director, and to the actor—yes.

The Playgoer. But Shakespeare——

The Stage Director. Shakespeare seldom directs the stage manager. Go through "Hamlet," "Romeo and Juliet," "King Lear," "Othello," any of the masterpieces, and except in some of the historical plays which contain descriptions of processions, etc., what do you find? How are the scenes described in "Hamlet"?

The Playgoer. My copy shows a clear description. It has "Act I., Scene i. Elsinore. A platform before the Castle."

The Stage Director. You are looking at a late edition with additions by a certain Mr Malone, but Shakespeare wrote nothing of the kind. His words are "Actus Primus. Scæna Prima." . . . And now let us look at "Romeo and Juliet." What does your book say?

The Playgoer. It says: "Act I., Scene i. Verona. A public place."

The Stage Director. And the second scene?

The Playgoer. It says: "Scene ii. A street."

The Stage Director. And the third scene?

The Playgoer. It says: "Scene iii. A room in Capulet's house."

The Stage Director. And now, would you like to hear what scene directions Shakespeare actually wrote for this play?

The Playgoer. Yes.

The Stage Director. He wrote: "Actus primus. Scæna prima." And not another word as to act or scene throughout the whole play. And now for "King Lear."

The Playgoer. No, it is enough. I see now. Evidently Shakespeare relied upon the intelligence of the stage men to complete their scene from his indication. . . . But is this the same in regard to the actions? Does not Shakespeare place some descriptions through "Hamlet," such as "Hamlet leaps into Ophelia's grave," "Laertes grapples with him," and later, "the attendants part them and they come out of the grave"?

The Stage Director. No, not one word. All the stage directions, from the first to the last, are the tame inventions of sundry editors, Mr Malone, Mr Capell, Theobald, and others, and they have committed an indiscretion in tampering with the play, for which we, the men of the theatre, have to suffer.

The Playgoer. How is that?

The Stage Director. Why, supposing any of us reading Shakespeare shall see in our mind's eye some other combination of movements contrary to the "instructions" of these gentlemen, and suppose we represent our ideas on the stage, we are instantly taken to task by some knowing one, who accuses us of altering the directions of Shakespeare—nay more, of altering his very intentions.

The Playgoer. But do not the "knowing ones," as you call them, know that Shakespeare wrote no stage directions?

The Stage Director. One can only guess that to be the case, to judge from their indiscreet criticisms. Anyhow, what I wanted to show you was that our greatest modern poet realised that to add stage directions was first of all unnecessary, and secondly, tasteless. We can therefore be sure that Shakespeare at any rate realised what was the work of the theatre craftsman—the stage manager, and that it was part of the stage manager's task to invent the scenes in which the play was to be set.

The Playgoer. Yes, and you were telling me what each part consisted of.

The Stage Director. Quite so. And now that we have disposed of the error that the author's directions are of any use, we can continue to speak of the way the

stage manager sets to work to interpret faithfully the play of the dramatist. I have said that he swears to follow the text faithfully, and that his first work is to read the play through and get the great impression; and in reading, as I have said, begins to see the whole colour, rhythm, action of the thing. He then puts the play aside for some time, and in his mind's eye mixes his palette (to use a painter's expression) with the colours which the impression of the play has called up. Therefore, on sitting down a second time to read through the play, he is surrounded by an atmosphere which he proposes to test. At the end of the second reading he will find that his more definite impressions have received clear and unmistakable corroboration, and that some of his impressions which were less positive have disappeared. He will then make a note of these. It is possible that he will even now commence to suggest, in line and colour, some of the scenes and ideas which are filling his head, but this is more likely to be delayed until he has re-read the play at least a dozen times.

The Playgoer. But I thought the stage manager always left that part of the play—the scene designing—to the scene painter?

The Stage Director. So he does, generally. First blunder of the modern theatre.

The Playgoer. How is it a blunder?

The Stage Director. This way: *A* has written a play which *B* promises to interpret faithfully. In so delicate a matter as the interpretation of so elusive a thing as the spirit of a play, which, do you think, will be the surest way to preserve the unity of that spirit? Will it be best if *B* does all the work by himself? or will it do to give the work into the hands of *C*, *D*, and *E*, each of whom see or think differently to *B* or *A*?

The Playgoer. Of course the former would be best. But is it possible for one man to do the work of three men?

The Stage Director. That is the only way the work can be done, if unity, the one thing vital to a work of art, is to be obtained.

The Playgoer. So, then, the stage manager does not call in a scene painter and ask him to design a scene, but he designs one himself?

The Stage Director. Certainly. And remember he does not merely sit down and draw a pretty or historically accurate design, with enough doors and windows in picturesque places, but he first of all chooses certain colours which seem to him to be in harmonv with the spirit of the play, rejecting other colours as out of tune. He then weaves into a pattern certain objects—an arch, a fountain, a balcony,

a bed—using the chosen object as the centre of his design. Then he adds to this all the objects which are mentioned in the play, and which are necessary to be seen. To these he adds, one by one, each character which appears in the play, and gradually each movement of each character, and each costume. He is as likely as not to make several mistakes in his pattern. If so, he must, as it were, unpick the design, and rectify the blunder, even if he has to go right back to the beginning and start the pattern all over again—or he may even have to begin a new pattern. At any rate, slowly, harmoniously, must the whole design develop, so that the eye of the beholder shall be satisfied. While this pattern for the eye is being devised, the designer is being guided as much by the sound of the verse or prose as by the sense or spirit. And shortly all is prepared, and the actual work can be commenced.

The Playgoer. What actual work? It seems to me that the stage manager has already been doing a good deal of what may be called actual work.

The Stage Director. Well, perhaps; but the difficulties have but commenced. By the actual work I mean work which needs skilled labour, such as the actual painting of the huge spaces of canvas for the scenes, and the actual making of the costumes.

The Playgoer. You are not going to tell me

that the stage manager actually paints his own scenes and cuts his own costumes, and sews them together?

The Stage Director. No, I will not say that he does so in every case and for every play, but he must have done so at one time or another during his apprenticeship, or must have closely studied all the technical points of these complicated crafts. Then will he be able to guide the skilled craftsmen in their different departments. And when the actual making of the scenes and costumes has commenced, the parts are distributed to the different actors, who learn the words before a single rehearsal takes place. (This, as you may guess, is not the custom, but it is what should be seen to by a stage director such as I describe.) Meantime, the scenes and costumes are almost ready. I will not tell you the amount of interesting but laborious work it entails to prepare the play up to this point. But even when once the scenes are placed upon the stage, and the costumes upon the actors, the difficulty of the work is still great.

The Playgoer. The stage director's work is not finished then?

The Stage Director. Finished! What do you mean?

The Playgoer. Well, I thought now that the scenes

and costumes were all seen to, the actors and actresses would do the rest.

The Stage Director. No, the stage manager's most interesting work is now beginning. His scene is set and his characters are clothed. He has, in short, a kind of dream picture in front of him. He clears the stage of all but the one, two, or more characters who are to commence the play, and he begins the scheme of lighting these figures and the scene.

The Playgoer. What, is not this branch left to the discretion of the master electrician and his men?

The Stage Director. The doing of it is left to them, but the manner of doing it is the business of the stage manager. Being, as I have said, a man of some intelligence and training, he has devised a special way of lighting his scene for this play, just as he has devised a special way of painting the scene and costuming the figures. If the word "harmony" held no significance for him, he would of course leave it to the first comer.

The Playgoer. Then do you actually mean that he has made so close a study of nature that he can direct his electricians how to make it appear as if the sun were shining at such and such an altitude, or as if the moonlight were flooding the interior of a room with such and such an intensity?

The Stage Director. No, I should not like to

suggest that, because the reproduction of nature's lights is not what my stage manager ever attempts. Neither should he attempt such an impossibility. Not to *reproduce* nature, but to *suggest* some of her most beautiful and most living ways—that is what my stage manager shall attempt. The other thing proclaims an overbearing assumption of omnipotence. A stage manager may well aim to be an artist, but it ill becomes him to attempt celestial honours. This attitude he can avoid by never trying to imprison or copy nature, for nature will be neither imprisoned nor allow any man to copy her with any success.

The Playgoer. Then in what way does he set to work? What guides him in his task of lighting the scene and costumes which we are speaking about?

The Stage Director. What guides him? Why, the scene and the costumes, and the verse and the prose, and the sense of the play. All these things, as I told you, have now been brought into harmony, the one with the other—all goes smoothly—what simpler then that it should so continue, and that the manager should be the only one to know how to preserve this harmony which he has commenced to create.

The Playgoer. Will you tell me some more about the actual way of lighting the scene and the actors?

The Stage Director. Certainly. What do you want to know?

The Playgoer. Well, will you tell me why they put lights all along the floor of the stage—footlights they call them I believe?

The Stage Director. Yes, footlights.

The Playgoer. Well, why are they put on the ground?

The Stage Director. It is one of the questions which has puzzled all the theatre reform gentlemen, and none have been able to find an answer, for the simple reason that there is no answer. There never was an answer, there never will be an answer. The only thing to do is to remove all the footlights out of all the theatres as quickly as possible and say nothing about it. It is one of those queer things which nobody can explain, and at which children are always surprised. Little Nancy Lake, in 1812, went to Drury Lane Theatre, and her father tells us that she also was astonished at the footlights. Said she:—

> "*And there's a row of lamps, my eye!*
> *How they do blaze—I wonder why*
> *They keep them on the ground.*"
> —"*Rejected Addresses.*"

That was in 1812! and we are still wondering.

The Playgoer. A friend of mine—an actor—once

told me that if there were no footlights all the faces of the actors would look dirty.

The Stage Director. That was the remark of a man who did not understand that in place of the footlights another method of lighting the faces and figures could be adopted. It is this simple kind of thing which never occurs to those people who will not devote a little time to even a slight study of the other branches of the craft.

The Playgoer. Do not the actors study the other crafts of the theatre?

The Stage Director. As a rule—no, and in some ways it is opposed to the very life of an actor. If an actor of intelligence were to devote much time to the study of all the branches of the theatrical art he would gradually cease to act, and would end by becoming a stage manager—so absorbing is the whole art in comparison with the single craft of acting.

The Playgoer. My friend the actor also added that if the footlights were removed the audience would not be able to see the expression of his face.

The Stage Director. Had Henry Irving or Elenora Duse said so, the remark would have had some meaning. The ordinary actor's face is either violently expressive or violently inexpressive, that it would be a blessing if the theatres were not only

From a Photograph taken by C. P. Small of the First Scene in "Bethelem," a Religious Play produced by Edward Gordon Craig, London, 1902. Given here as an example of a stage illuminated by means other than footlights

without footlights but without any lights at all. By the way, an excellent theory as to the origin of the footlights is advanced by M. Ludovic Celler in his "Les Decors, les costumes et la mise-en-scéne au XVII. siècle." The usual way of lighting the stage was by means of large chandeliers, circular or triangular, which were suspended above the heads of the actors and the audience; and M. Celler is of the opinion that the system of footlights owes its origin to the small plain theatres which could not afford to have chandeliers, and therefore placed tallow candles on the floor in front of the stage. I believe this theory to be correct, for common-sense could not have dictated such an artistic blunder; whereas the box-office receipts may easily have done so. Remember how little artistic virtue is in the box office! When we have time I will tell you some things about this same powerful usurper of the theatrical throne—the box-office. But let us return to a more serious and a more interesting topic than this lack of expression and this footlight matter. We had passed in review the different tasks of the stage manager—scene, costume, lighting—and we had come to the most interesting part, that of the manipulation of the figures in all their movements and speeches. You expressed astonishment that the acting—that is to say, the speaking and actions of the actors—was not left

to the actors to arrange for themselves. But consider for an instant the nature of this work. Would you have that which has already grown into a certain unified pattern, suddenly spoiled by the addition of something accidental?

The Playgoer. How do you mean? I understand what you suggest, but will you not show me more exactly how the actor can spoil the pattern?

The Stage Director. Unconsciously spoil it, mind you! I do not for an instant mean that it is his wish to be out of harmony with his surroundings, but he does so through innocence. Some actors have the right instincts in this matter, and some have none whatever. But even those whose instincts are most keen cannot remain in the pattern, cannot be harmonious, without following the directions of the stage manager.

The Playgoer. Then you do not even permit the leading actor and actress to move and act as their instincts and reason dictate?

The Stage Director. No, rather must they be the very first to follow the direction of the stage manager, so often do they become the very centre of the pattern —the very heart of the emotional design.

The Playgoer. And is that understood and appreciated by them?

The Stage Director. Yes, but only when they

realise and appreciate at the same time that the play, and the right and just interpretation of the play, is the all-important thing in the modern theatre. Let me illustrate this point to you. The play to be presented is "Romeo and Juliet." We have studied the play, prepared scene and costume, lighted both, and now our rehearsals for the actors commence. The first movement of the great crowd of unruly citizens of Verona, fighting, swearing, killing each other, appals us. It horrifies us that in this white little city of roses and song and love there should dwell this amazing and detestable hate which is ready to burst out at the very church doors, or in the middle of the May festival, or under the windows of the house of a newly born girl. Quickly following on this picture, and even while we remember the ugliness which larded both faces of Capulet and Montague, there comes strolling down the road the son of Montague, our Romeo, who is soon to be lover and the loved of his Juliet. Therefore, whoever is chosen to move and speak as Romeo must move and speak as part and parcel of the design—this design which I have already pointed out to you as having a definite form. He must move across our sight in a certain way, passing to a certain point, in a certain light, his head at a certain angle, his eyes, his feet, his whole body in tune with the play, and not (as

is often the case) in tune with his own thoughts only, and these out of harmony with the play. For his thoughts (beautiful as they may chance to be) may not match the spirit or the pattern which has been so carefully prepared by the director.

The Playgoer. Would you have the stage manager control the movements of whoever might be impersonating the character of Romeo, even if he were a fine actor?

The Stage Director. Most certainly; and the finer the actor the finer his intelligence and taste, and therefore the more easily controlled. In fact, I am speaking in particular of a theatre wherein all the actors are men of refinement and the manager a man of peculiar accomplishments.

The Playgoer. But are you not asking these intelligent actors almost to become puppets?

The Stage Director. A sensitive question! which one would expect from an actor who felt uncertain about his powers. A puppet is at present only a doll, delightful enough for a puppet show. But for a theatre we need more than a doll. Yet that is the feeling which some actors have about their relationship with the stage manager. They feel they are having their strings pulled, and resent it, and show they feel hurt—insulted.

The Playgoer. I can understand that.

The Stage Director. And cannot you also understand that they should be willing to be controlled? Consider for a moment the relationship of the men on a ship, and you will understand what I consider to be the relationship of men in a theatre. Who are the workers on a ship?

The Playgoer. A ship? Why, there is the captain, the first officer, the second officer, the first mate, the second mate and so on, and the crew.

The Stage Director. Well, and what is it that guides the ship?

The Playgoer. The rudder.

The Stage Director. Yes, and what else?

The Playgoer. The steersman who holds the wheel of the rudder.

The Stage Director. And who else?

The Playgoer. The man who controls the steersman.

The Stage Director. And who is that?

The Playgoer. The first officer.

The Stage Director. And who controls the first officer?

The Playgoer. The captain.

The Stage Director. And are any orders which do not come from the captain, or by his authority, obeyed?

The Playgoer. No, they should not be.

The Stage Director. And can the ship steer its course in safety without the captain?

The Playgoer. It is not usual.

The Stage Director. And do the crew obey the mate, and the mate the first officer, and the officer the captain?

The Playgoer. Yes, as a rule.

The Stage Director. Willingly?

The Playgoer. Yes.

The Stage Director. And is that not called discipline?

The Playgoer. Yes.

The Stage Director. And discipline—what is that the result of?

The Playgoer. The proper and willing subjection to rules and principles.

The Stage Director. And the first of those rules is obedience, is it not?

The Playgoer. It is.

The Stage Director. Very well, then. It will not be difficult for you to understand that a theatre in which so many hundred persons are engaged at work is in many respects like a ship, and demands like management. And it will not be difficult for you to see how the slightest sign of mutiny would be disastrous. Mutiny has been

well anticipated in the navy, but not in the theatre. The navy has taken care to define, in clear and unmistakable voice, that the captain of a vessel is the king, and a despotic ruler into the bargain. Mutiny on a ship is put down by corporeal punishment, by irons, or, in extreme cases, by the pistol.

The Playgoer. But you are not going to suggest such a possibility for the theatre?

The Stage Director. The theatre, unlike the ship, does not use firearms, and is not made for war. But what I wish to show you is that until discipline is understood in a theatre to be willing and reliant obedience to the manager or captain no supreme achievement can be accomplished.

The Playgoer. But are not the actors, scenemen, and the rest all willing workers?

The Stage Director. Why, my dear friend, there never were such glorious natured people as these men and women of the theatre. They are enthusiastically willing, but sometimes their judgment is at fault, and they become as willing to be unruly as to be obedient. What these workers have not yet quite comprehended is the value of the director.

The Playgoer. And that director, why should he not be an actor or a scene-painter?

The Stage Director. Do you pick your leader from

the ranks, exalt him to be captain, and then let him handle the guns and the ropes? No; the director of a theatre must be a man apart from any of the crafts. He must be a man who knows, but no longer handles the ropes.

The Playgoer. But I believe it is a fact that many well-known leaders in the theatres have been actors and stage managers at the same time?

The Stage Director. Yes, that is so. But you will not find it easy to assure me that no mutiny was heard of under their rule. Right away from all this question of positions there is the question of the art, the work. If an actor assumes the management of the stage, and if he is a better actor than his fellows, a natural instinct will lead him to make himself the centre of everything. He will feel that unless he does so the work will appear thin and unsatisfying. He will pay less heed to the play than he will to his own part, and he will, in fact, gradually cease to look upon the work as a whole. And this is not good for the work. This is not the way a work of art is to be produced in the theatre.

The Playgoer. But might it not be possible to find a great actor who would be so great an artist that as manager he would never do as you say, but who would always handle himself as actor, just the same as he handles the rest of the material?

A DESIGN FOR A SCENE FOR "ELECTRA" *Edward Gordon Craig*

The Stage Director. All things are possible, but, firstly, it is against the nature of an actor to do as you suggest; secondly, it is against the nature of the stage manager to perform; and thirdly, it is against all nature that a man can be in two places at once. Now, the place of the actor is on the stage, in a certain position, ready by means of his brains to give suggestions of certain emotions, surrounded by certain scenes and people; and it is the place of the stage manager to be in front of this, that he may view it as a whole. So that you see even if we found our perfect actor who was our perfect stage manager, he could not be in two places at the same time. Of course we have sometimes seen the conductor of a small orchestra playing the part of the first violin, but not from choice, and not to a satisfactory issue; neither is it the practice in large orchestras.

The Playgoer. I understand, then, that you would allow no one to rule on the stage except the stage manager?

The Stage Director. The nature of the work permits nothing else.

The Playgoer. Not even the playwright?

The Stage Director. Only when the playwright has practised and studied the crafts of acting, scene-painting, costume, lighting, and dance, not otherwise.

But playwrights, who have not been cradled in the theatre, generally know little of these crafts. Goethe, whose love for the theatre remained ever fresh and beautiful, was in many ways one of the greatest of stage directors. But, when he linked himself to the Weimar theatre, he forgot to do what the great musician who followed him remembered. Goethe permitted an authority in the theatre higher than himself, that is to say, the owner of the theatre. Wagner was careful to possess himself of his theatre, and become a sort of feudal baron in his castle.

The Playgoer. Was Goethe's failure as a theatre director due to this fact?

The Stage Director. Obviously, for had Goethe held the keys of the doors that impudent little poodle would never have got as far as its dressing-room; the leading lady would never have made the theatre and herself immortally ridiculous; and Weimar would have been saved the tradition of having perpetrated the most shocking blunder which ever occurred inside a theatre.

The Playgoer. The traditions of most theatres certainly do not seem to show that the artist is held in much respect on the stage.

The Stage Director. Well, it would be easy to say a number of hard things about the theatre and its ignorance of art. But one does not hit a thing which

is down, unless, perhaps, with the hope that the shock may cause it to leap to its feet again. And our Western theatre is very much down. The East still boasts a theatre. Ours here in the West is on its last legs. But I look for a Renaissance.

The Playgoer. How will that come?

The Stage Director. Through the advent of a man who shall contain in him all the qualities which go to make up a master of the theatre, and through the reform of the theatre as an instrument. When that is accomplished, when the theatre has become a masterpiece of mechanism, when it has invented a technique, it will without any effort develop a *creative art* of its own. But the whole question of the development of the craft into a self-reliant and creative art would take too long to go thoroughly into at present. There are already some theatre men at work on the building of the theatres; some are reforming the acting, some the scenery. And all of this must be of some small value. But the first thing to be realised is that little or no result can come from the reforming of a single craft of the theatre without at the same time, in the same theatre, reforming all the other crafts. *The whole renaissance of the Art of the Theatre depends upon the extent that this is realised.* The Art of the Theatre, as I have already told you, is divided up

into so many crafts: acting, scene, costume, lighting, carpentering, singing, dancing, etc., that it must be realised at the commencement that ENTIRE, not PART reform is needed; and it must be realised that *one* part, one craft, has a *direct* bearing upon each of the other crafts in the theatre, and that no result can come from fitful, uneven reform, but only from a systematic progression. Therefore, the reform of the Art of the Theatre is possible to those men alone who have studied and practised all the crafts of the theatre.

The Playgoer. That is to say, your ideal stage manager.

The Stage Director. Yes. You will remember that at the commencement of our conversation I told you my belief in the renaissance of the Art of the Theatre was based in my belief in the renaissance of the stage director, and that when he had understood the right use of actors, scene, costume, lighting, and dance, and by means of these had mastered the crafts of interpretation, he would then gradually acquire the mastery of action, line, colour, rhythm, and words, this last strength developing out of all the rest. . . . Then I said the Art of the Theatre would have won back its rights, and its work would stand self-reliant as a creative art, and no longer as an interpretative craft.

The Playgoer. Yes, and at the time I did not quite

understand what you meant, and though I can now understand your drift, I do not quite in my mind's eye see the stage without its poet.

The Stage Director. What? Shall anything be lacking when the poet shall no longer write for the theatre?

The Playgoer. The play will be lacking.

The Stage Director. Are you sure of that?

The Playgoer. Well, the play will certainly not exist if the poet or playwright is not there to write it.

The Stage Director. There will not be any play in the sense in which you use the word.

The Playgoer. But you propose to present something to the audience, and I presume before you are able to present them with that something you must have it in your possession.

The Stage Director. Certainly, you could not have made a surer remark. Where you are at fault is to take for granted, as if it were a law for the Medes and Persians, that that *something* must be made of words.

The Playgoer. Well, what is this something which is not words, but for presentation to the audience?

The Stage Director. First tell me, is not an idea something?

The Playgoer. Yes, but it lacks form.

The Stage Director. Well, but is it not permissible to give an idea whatever form the artist chooses?

The Playgoer. Yes.

The Stage Director. And is it an unpardonable crime for the theatrical artist to use some different material to the poet's?

The Playgoer. No.

The Stage Director. Then we are permitted to attempt to give form to an idea in whatever material we can find or invent, provided it is not a material which should be put to a better use?

The Playgoer. Yes.

The Stage Director. Very good, follow what I have to say for the next few minutes, and then go home and think about it for a while. Since you have granted all I asked you to admit, I am now going to tell you out of what material an artist of the theatre of the future will create his masterpieces. Out of ACTION, SCENE, and VOICE. Is it not very simple?

And when I say *action*, I mean both gesture and dancing, the prose and poetry of action.

When I say *scene*, I mean all which comes before the eye, such as the lighting, costume, as well as the scenery.

When I say *voice*, I mean the spoken word or the word which is sung, in contradiction to the word which is read, for the word written to be spoken and the word written to be read are two entirely different things.

And now, though I have but repeated what I told you at the beginning of our conversation, I am delighted to see that you no longer look so puzzled.

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