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ABSTRACT

Attempts to apply elements of Japanese theatre to western productions, though commendable, are frequently unsuccessful. Effective use of the Japanese theatre's acting or production techniques requires knowledge of the forces producing its specific styles and techniques. Noh and Kabuki drama harmonize music, dance, and drama to create an awareness of elegance, form, the universe, peace, the role of humanity, and beauty. Scrupulously preserved over centuries, these plays try to reproduce an ideal form--never a major concern in western theatre. Western adaptations fail because they adopt the masks, costumes, and movement of Japanese theatre without considering the function these stylized elements were designed to fulfill. The search for an aesthetic as chronicled by the great Japanese actors of the past offers valuable lessons to Western theatre. Anyone looking for guidance from the Japanese theatre or any foreign art form must assimilate a set of cultural realities first and then metamorphose that into an art form. In terms of technique, this requires total immersion in the culture's form and content, rather than imitation of its surface. (HTH)

LEARNING FROM THE TREASURES

Acting Techniques from the Classic Japanese Theater and Their Relationship to the West

by

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Presented to the American Theater Association on August 8, 1983 Minneapolis, Minnesota

ABSTRACT

LEARNING FROM THE TREASURES

Acting Techniques from the Classic
Japanese Theater
and
Their Relationship to the West

This is a paper which explores some of the wisdom of Japanese Kabuki and Noh actors, as well as some puppet theater performers. Most of the information from the actors is culled from The Actor's Analects, but they are not the main purpose of the paper.

The primary purpose of the paper is the inquiry into the creation of style--in this case the Japanese theatrical style. It sets forth a theoretical structure through which style is created and suggests that the things actors have had to say in the Analects, as well as any attempt to create an "exotic" style, to be filtered through this system rather than copied directly from somewhere else.

Along the way the author inquires into the very purpose of the Japanese theatrical forms that have been preserved, suggesting that they are not, in fact, what they seem to Westerners to be, at all. It is the strong position of the paper that an assimilation of cultural realities, then the amalgamation of ideas and substance create a new artistic necessity which, in turn, may create a new, hybrid style which is not an imitation.

The author then argues that an audience-centered approach creating a particular and geniune relationship is the only way to come close to the art.

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LEARNING FROM THE TREASURES

by

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One of the things which always seems to happen just after a theater person has either been to Japan, has read a book about or seen a production of Bunraku, Kabuki, or Noh theater is that the next production they do features lots of posturing, stylized movement, people in black walking along behind giant puppets, or some other accoutrement of "exotic" theater. What has occurred is that in a genuinely motivated search for the universal elements that enable the theater to cross all cultural lines, to prove, as Gordon Craig ha said, that, "All theaters of all lands are alike in all things except language, and, alas! the weeds so closely resemble each other that it is positively comic," (Craig, 96,97) the well-meaning person has seized on the external elements. Once these strange-seeming production/performance techniques are in tow, the producer then proceeds to apply them to some other playwright; if this is a first effort Brecht will probably be the hapless victim. Later on no one--not even Euripides and his colleagues--is exempt. (Sometimes they are even first!)

Now far be it from me to criticize this kind of undertaking. The search for universals that illuminate and explain the theater, and by extension human behavior, is a high-minded undertaking. Further, the attempt at using foreign impulses and styles to breathe new energy into our own, eclectic theater is a laudable instinct. The problem, however, is that many, if not most of these productions remain inaccessible to their intended audiences, and when they do work it is only rarely, and then for a small portion of the audience.

All of which brings me to the point of this discussion; rather, the major question: Why? If we borrowers are in a "fight to discover, to experience truth about ourselves; to tear away the masks behind which we hide daily", (Grotowski, p. 256), if we are looking for the universals that will illuminate life and the theater,

why are we so frequently unsuccessful? Are we going about it the wrong way? Are we borrowing incorrect things? If either one of these questions can be answered in the affirmative then we are on to the next question, predictably: What is the "right" way; what are the "right" artifacts, and is it even possible?

This is the time when the writer of a treatise like this usually says, "Perhaps a little background . . . " and the reader skips the next three pages. I hope that if I promise it'll be just a little you won't skip ahead. O.K.? I promise.

Perhaps, then, a little background . . .

First, briefly, style. What is it and what has it come to mean in the theater? If we take the most commonly held theatrical notion when we talk about "stylizing" a play we are discussing the idea of endeavoring to "present it with a noticeable artful manner . . . usually anti-illusionistic rather than realitistic." (Barnet, et al, p. 261.) It will be my contention that this commonly accepted definition may, in fact, be at the very heart of the problem.

So let's discuss real style, not only in the theater but in all endeavor, and then return to the theater and to our earlier question about using techniques and theatrical devices from other lands. Style, in my view, develops as a response to a given set of circumstances. These circumstances or necessities can exist within a context as large as a culture or as small as a single problem, and of course all levels interact. By this I mean that the problems may be the same in all cultures (for instance, how do we dispose of trash), but the way the problem is solved will vary considerably and the reason is an interaction of culture and necessity. Perhaps the easiest way to understand this is to use something relatively simple as an example.

In colonial days in America one of the sought after amenities for peoples' homes was glass windows. Glass kept out the cold while simultaneously admitting light, and it seemed that they were nearly a necessity after a while. Anyway, most people wanted them. There were, however, problems: glass was very brittle in those days,

and there was no such thing as safety glass or plastic. Further, the strength of the material, when it was necessary to cover a large area, was not great, and there was a definite upper limit on the size a pane of glass could be until it would become subject to breaking into a million pieces every time there was a high wind. But the area covered by the optimum sized piece of glass was not really large enough to admit the requisite amount of light.

The response to this set of necessities, here in America, as well as many other places, was, as we all know by now, small panes of glass that were fitted together with mouldings to make larger areas of transparency. These were called (and still are) windows. Here we made the windows with wooden mouldings, in other countries they were diamond shaped and held together with lead, and there were still other solutions, I am certain, although I am not an expert on the history of windows, by any means.

All of the above was appropriate to the desire for windows. Design decisions were made, solutions conceptualized by people familiar with the materials with which they were working, and windows were built.

(Now we are on the second phase of this process, and we are closing in on the point brought up earlier--stylization and the transfer of methods of presentation.) As time wore on, however, we developed lots of technology having to do with glass. We can now make entire buildings out of it, if we want to. Still, in our wish to capture our past, we more than occasionally find people who go out shopping for houses of the "colonial style" and with that they want, naturally, colonial "style" windows.

And here's the connection: It should be apparent that whatever we buy on our shopping trip, whether they are small paned windows or, more frequently, large paned windows with plastic overlays to simulate the "look" of the small panes, we are no longer dealing with style in the sense of design necessity. Perhaps we are dealing

with a marketplace necessity, but in that case in architectural terms we are talking about stylization.

I am purposely using the words "style" and "stylization" as they are the common references we make in the theater. And we should be able, through the use of this metaphor, to begin the clarifying process about the transfer of "universal" theatrical techniques. First, though, we are now able to provide the initial portion of the answer to the question posed earlier about why so few "exotic" productions seem to succeed. When we layer on to something an artifact or style of another time or culture, we are in grave danger of creating the same kind of "plastic" artificiality as when we buy windows that are "colonial look," handbags that are "leather look," or, for that matter, almost anything that has the suffix "-look."

This last is particularly significant when we realize that the uniqueness of the theater throughout the ages, and in fact its startling longevity despite predictions to the contrary, is predominantly due to its ability to create experience that is genuine; "first time."

But what does all of this have to do with Japanese acting techniques--or with their application to the occident? Well, if we follow the logic of the window metaphor and believe the notion that we must inquire fairly deeply into what has created the techniques, the results of which we see, we begin to understand some areas of inquiry necessary to define the "circumstances." In the case of a country like Japan, where the traditional theater forms are quite old, we might also wish to understand the "new" necessities, i.e., what keeps it all going? All of this is preliminary to our deciding, as producers, if we can identify a play-audience-occasion-necessity concatenation that will make our effort "work."

THE ARENA

Clearly, then, in order to understand and use either the acting or production techniques of the Japanese theater we must look at the circumstances surrounding the

craft as it is learned by its practitioners. What is the theater that has bred the techniques, and why do they exist--what caused them? We will make this inquiry necessarily brief, but perhaps with a few details we can begin to establish a method for tracking down the clues. I will start with the Noh drama and theater, really because it is as good a place as any to begin.

Noh drama is, and was, "an independent and original art form--ultimately designed to supersede the earlier Dengaku, Saragaku, and other song-dances," and it "incorporates significant elements of the (Dengaku), especially Kusemai (tune-dance)." (Noh Drama, p. ix.)

It is important that the term Noh was used particularly to "denote 'accomplishment,' 'skill,' 'talent,' [and] derives from a verb signifying 'to be able,' to have the power,' 'to accomplish something' . . . " (Ibid.) Zeami, the most famous of all Noh dramatists (1363-1444), who also summed up Noh's aesthetic goals and described its practices, used a term which is best defined as "elegant imitation."(Ibid.)

One further goal of the Noh is that it is meant to harmonize music, dance, and drama perfectly, resulting in an experience called yugen which includes an awareness of elegance, form, the universe, peace, the role of humanity, and above all, the supreme awareness of beauty. (Discussions of yugen are similar, but more complicated, to discussions in the west about what Aristotle meant by catharsis.)

Now then, we have a culture developing and maintaining a theater (it is virtually exactly the same now as it was in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries!) which has as its primary values form and substance and the perfect harmony of the two. It is not unimportant that the upper classes (not necessarily in money, but in status) for whom and by whom the Noh was developed, saw the accomplishment of a task, whether or not it was related to anything we might call "practical" as an important exercise in being a human being. Tea Ceremony, for instance, has no utilitarian purpose as we might commonly define it, nor does Ikebana (flower arranging), but as Charles Cleaver says in his very complete Japanese and Americans--Cultural Parallels

and Paradoxes, "No student of Japanese culture could ever ignore its presence." (Cleaver, pp. 35-36.) The notion of being able to do something for its own sake is paramount here, and virtually without parallel in the western tradition.

To go a little further, the idea of the perfectability of art to achieve harmony, beauty and the resultant yugen also plays a role. Let's begin to "track through" this process ourselves. Imagine, for a moment, that you, the reader,are a Japanese in the fifteenth century. You value this complex yet spare theater form above anything and uppermost in your mind is the idea (culturally derived, to be sure) of perfecting it. What would you do--particularly for your lead actors? Remember: everything must be in harmony, and it must be as close to perfect every time it is done as is possible.—

The first thing which comes to mind is training, naturally. The human body must be disciplined, taught to move in exacting ways. But even at that--even if every actor who plays a role moves the same way, they will still look different. The universe requires that its order be expressed carefully, not haphazardly and not by any old person who happens to be around. So, what next?

Clothing would be a good next step, particularly if it disguises the figure of the actor enough so that the various sizes people come in is not as noticeable. And perhaps your most important stroke of genius is: a mask! The perfect solution. Not only will everyone look the same in the present, they will look the same for all time! Yugen once created can be preserved forever, and in fact it very nearly is. (You can begin to fill in some complexity here yourselves. There are bound to be rival schools led by different directors who interpret the requirements of yugen in slightly different ways, particularly since three or four-hundred years have passed since the original. Use your own imagination to create the politics, lobbying, currying of favor with the authorities, etc., that might be the result and you will not be far from what really happened. Now, in fact, there are five basic Noh

"schools" in Japan, each indistinguishable from the other by the unskilled observer, but each with deeply held beliefs.)

But we must continue. Who should carve these important masks? Who better than the greatest artists available; the men who can distill the "essence" of a character or emotion or age. And in fact it was these great artists, people who could make the particular so true that it becomes timeless and universal, who "designed and carved many of the Noh Masks." (Ibid., p. xiv.)

Not only were the masks and costumes standardized by the end of the sixteenth century, so was the order of the program. There is a jo-ha-kyu (introduction-main part-climax) principle applied to the organization as well as the performance. In fact, if a different play than one specified is chosen as the introductory play, in order to assure the proper effect it will be played at the tempo and in the manner of the waki, the standard introductory play. (Ibid.)

Our observations are beginning to get more sophisticated now. Suddenly we see why these plays are still performed today in their archaic forms; as an additional purpose they are indeed "charged with" (if one can use an active verb in referring to a play) preserving themselves. The evidence of this piles up: the very language of the plays, for instance, is completely inaccessible to modern Japanese, and they are given a book with a "translation" as they enter the theater.

Interesting. It could be fairly said that the purpose of these plays was never the same as the purpose of plays in western theater. In point of fact they were composed and performed to provide reinforcement to certain cultural values we do not even have. Once perfected they became a repository (as did Tea Ceremony) of the culture, and they are performed specifically to keep intact the unbroken line of Japanese history--they are one of the elements of the "glue" which holds the Japanese people together. (And another paradox begins to clear up: because they exist it is not necessary for everyone to see them. It sounds very "Zen-like, but makes some sense.) A little more investigation into this idea reveals that potters and other

craftsmen considered to have the highest levels of skill spend years trying to make artifacts that are identical to those made four-hundred years earlier. Now we must add to all of what has been said the Buddhist nature of most of the texts and it becomes apparent that the genesis of this style of masked drama is so different from western drama as to make it almost inaccessible to us on the basis of anything but the coarsest surface imitation.

And this, then, is the second of the reasons why so many of the "stylized" productions refuse to work: the preparation hasn't been done. We have mistaken the masks and the costumes and the movement for something they are not; we have pressed them into service without regard to how they evolved in the first place. We haven't, simply put, done even a portion of our homework, because if we had the first question we would ask is the purpose of the imitation. If it is to give our production an "exotic look," to attract attention for its own sake, are we really doing anything different from what the owners of fake polynesian restaurants are doing--the only difference being that our decor is what we are advertising for sale; there's not even any food!

And what of the other forms. We began rather arbitrarily with the Noh as I announced that it was as good a place as any to begin. The Kabuki drama was the "answer" of the common people to the Noh which finally became so difficult and refined as to be unavailable to the more ordinary folk. The Kabuki was, however, heavily based in the same ideas and became popular at least partly because it was presented in an idiom that everyone could understand. Perhaps the most impressive difference (and the one that accounts for westerners preferring Kabuki) was that the story actually took place in front of the audience whereas Noh generally was is a recounting of an event that had taken place before the play. (Halford, p. 446.)

Still, the popular taste of Japan should not be confused with popular taste in other cultures. This is clearly evident when we realize that it wasn't to be long

before the irrepresible desire of Japan to continue itself was asserted with regard to both Kabuki and Bunraku (the puppet theater) and the Japanese were about "saving" both of these art forms as well as Noh. It is interesting that the "school problem" mentioned earlier cropped up with regard to Bunraku as well, and it wasn't long before the Bunraku puppets of Osaka and the "round-eyed" puppets of Awajishima were in a pitched battle asking the government to decide which of them was the "official" puppet theater of the nation.

All of this is important because it represents the Japanese response to a felt need. When Gordon Craig said he thought that all actors ought to be "super-marrionettes" in the service of the possible perfection of the theater, most theater people thought he had gone round the bend. When Zeami suggested it, it was adopted and became the "law" of the classical and popular Japanese theater--a theater that had no competition until late in the nineteenth century from western forms--again, by law, as it were.

Withal, we come to designing the production, itself, to using some techniques. By this time it should be clear that a fairly elaborate set of needs will have to be either discovered or created in an audience in order to make this kind of dramatic presentation successful. Yeats, Pound, et al were very upset when their Noh inspired work wasn't well-received. They were upset because they thought they understood. But now we know that that was not nearly enough. In fact, without an audience centered approach, the remarkable thing is that they ever could have thought significant numbers of people would be interested!

As can be seen, I have not dealt at all with movement, stylization and the shorthand that conveys emotions, etc. which exists in all these forms. In truth there is still 99.5% of the iceberg under the water here. But the logical extension of the brief outline, or way of thinking that I have presented here is that before we try to use Japanese, or any other techniques on the stage we should deal carefully with the reasons we want to do it and with their relationship to the reasons the

techniques were used in the first place. If we do not do this it is safe to say that we will end up with a modern house which has a few "colonial look" window panes every once in awhile--to no apparent purpose or interest.

If you can remember back when I said I would be brief, the reason we were dealing with these matters was so that we could begin to understand the context in which actors learned their craft, and so we now go on to a second part of this paper. Once we understand the cultural context and the place that the theater holds in it, and once we understand the great amount of prescription that actors had "layered" on them from the beginning of their training as youngsters, then we can ask, "What can we learn from them?" and "Is it even profitable to try?"

Take heart. I do believe there are things we can learn from them, but with this caveat: It is essential that we filter what the wisest of these actors have to say through what they must have meant, and then that we translate these into our own necessities, our own audiences, and back into our performances.

Back to the metaphor for a moment to clear that up. If we go to Japan and find that instead of windows they use paper shoji, do we come back and immediately stick them on our houses? No. Of course not. Climatic conditions, morals, customs, etc., all have to be taken into account. Indeed, if we were to do the former we would be thought at best eccentric and a curiosity; at worst we would probably be considered dangerous to the community. What we do do, however, is think about the concept: open, multi-purpose rooms, designs which let natural heating, cooling, and other ventilation take place, the need for occasional privacy, form and function as a unity, etc. Then we begin to design with outcomes in mind--outcomes for living, not for looking at.

In fact, it is this very notion of finding the essential result that we want, the "ideal" outcome, that is at the core of many other professions, such as successful industrial consulting, etc. And not having it is at the core of unsuccessful enter-

prises. To give one example, imitating the Japanese Quality Circle concept in American factories has generally been a disaster, and for the same reasons we have been discussing: it is an attempt to transplant whole a cultural artifact. In cases where quality control success has been achieved in industry it has been because the focus has been on the results achieved by Quality Circles in Japan, and by working backwards, ever mindful of our own set of constraints.

So what can we learn from those men who nowadays are designated "Living National Treasures of Japan"; what do the Japanese actors of the past have to offer us? Am I saying, as I seem to be, that imitation of this acting/production style is not something we should discuss? Yes and no. What we must discuss is what's behind these techniques that we see, particularly those of the great actors who were also great teachers, and just as we inquire after the desired result when we look at transferring things from houses or factories, we must look at results when transferring things in the arts--never at form, alone. Knowing the strict formulations within which the things we are going to see were practiced make them all the more valuable for us in the theater, as well as in dance and other highly proscribed artistic events.

Much of the material which follows is taken from The Actors' Analects, "a collection of teachings by actors known since the days of old as famous for their skills." (p. 29) And indeed it was in this book that I found the reason we must start with teachers, perhaps even ignore those great performers who were naturally gifted. You see:

> Yamashita Kyoemon said, "Sakata Tojuro is a born genius and is recognized in the Three Cities as an actor of true worth. Among those actors who can be called great today, one cannot think that there is one who reaches the standard of Tojuro, nor can I claim to do so myself. However, perhaps because he is a born genius, he was unlikely to become a teacher. The reason . . . take as an example a master gardener who . . . bends and shapes [a pine tree's] branches and makes of it a superb tree. Then there is the pine which has grown naturally into a fine tree with excellent shape. The [former] is an excellence in which lack of ability has been . . . shaped into a fine talent. Thus, because this sort of

> ability has been bent into shape, the person who is possessed of it has learned how to form artistry and how to teach it to his pupils. Therefore he is to be relied on as a teacher. The other, innate genius, is one to whom it came at birth, and since he, himself, has no experience of having been bent and shaped by others, he does not know how to bend and shape them. Therefore, as a teacher, no reliance can be placed upon him. (Analects, p. 71)

There is, then, teaching to be done. Which means there is also learning. What might the actor or actress take from the orient in terms of technique? How about this:

> Sakurayama Shozaemon learned by heart over three thousand old poems because, he said, if you knew many old poems, it was very useful when you were composing words. For this reason he was very skillful at writing speeches and other actors used his services to a considerable extent.(Analects, p. 117.)

And this:

> Kataoka Nizaemon recommended actors to learn how to write haikai, for it was this above all that would help their art and be useful in all sorts of connections, be it the gods, Buddha, or love [divisions of the anthologies of 31 syllable waka poetry], and insure that they are not ignorant either in their thoughts or words. (Ibid., Italics mine.)

The first step in the training program? Perhaps, although where, exactly, it goes may be subject to some interpretation. The advice is, however, interesting for two reasons. First, it seems to come almost directly from Stanislavsky and our other famous acting teachers/directors. Namely, learn all you can, and in particular do not be ignorant of literature, the past, or other arts. But proceeding from the assumptions we discussed during the first portion of this paper, the advice seems to take on some added significance. That is: immerse yourself in the form and content of this world. Learn the haikai (which includes the seventeen syllable poetry we call haiku as well as "linked verse" called renga and the prose associated with haikai called haibun. Ideas come from other ideas, not from surface imitation.

Here is another piece which has similar advice:

> A certain actor had a son who was twelve or thirteen years old and was attending school. He said to him, "Things which an actor need not learn are the use of the abacus, and calligraphy, and there

> are also several other things that he can ignore. Tojuro [not the father] heard this and said, "No, no, that is not true at all. The actor's art is like a beggar's bag. Regardless of whether you need it at the time or not, you should pick up everything as you come across it and take it away with you. You should make use only of those things which you need, and those you do not you should put on one side, and bring them out when you need them. There must not be anything about which you are entirely ignorant. (Analects, p. 86.)

I shall let this pass without comment. Let me reproduce some more of this acting/production advice, then we can carry on our discussion.

There is an interesting item titled "How Arashi San'emon Conducted Rehearsals for a New Piece":

> The late Arashi San'emon gathered together at his house the actors who were to play with him in a piece he was preparing with love scenes, lovers' quarrels and so on in it. He had always been fond of sake [Japanese rice wine] and he immediately brought out the wine cups, and although there was in the assembly a boy with whom he was on affectionate terms, he did not even look at him. Instead he went and whispered and murmured to another boy, at times stroking his cheeks and having him drink from his cup. Later he became intoxicated and no longer in control of himself. The first boy had long been of a jealous disposition and he was uttering insults of all sorts when the second boy and a tachiyaku calmed him down and got him to drink a cup of reconciliation. [A famous actor entered and seeing the disorder] exclaimed: ". . . It's not the moment for quarrels with boy friends, come on, come on; rehearse, rehearse!" San'emon replied, "That is what I thought too, so I've been rehearsing for some time already. From the moment when I handed out the first wine cup up to the cup of reconciliation that we have witnessed, including the jealous boy and the men who calmed him down, I have remembered it all. This is the rehearsal for the next play." And in fact that is how he devised it. Ask any actor and he will say that invented scenes are bad and truth is good. Because he believed in the correctness of this, he had the wine cups brought out, even though normally sake is not served at a place where a rehearsal is taking place, in order to assist in the writing of words for the next play, and his motive for provoking a situation in which the boy could not but be jealous was the same. He said that all should do it in the same way on stage. It is an indication of the amount of trouble that men were prepared to take in the old days. (Ibid. p. 92.)

One thing that should be becoming noticeable is the creative search that many of these performers are going through. Indeed, all of these past speeches are from the "Genroku Kabuki" and these plays were nearly all new. The actors were not "helped (or hampered) by the rigid family discipline which today defines the narrow limits

of how a role should be played," (Analects, p. 25) but were, in fact, in the process of defining those limits. Some of them changed their performances quite radically, even from performance to performance, if we are to believe the accounts of contemporaries, because they were engaged in the search for the form. They were operating within the limitations of Japanese culture and ideas about artistic form to define their art. The Kabuki we see today has as its main interest the acting, and also the continuation of itself. Clearly in the west, without the tradition to continue, the pilfering of the form may actually have a numbing effect on an unschooled audience--exactly the reverse of what was probably intended when the new form was first excitedly proposed.

Here is a selection on Joruri, the story-telling, narrative form which evolved into the puppet theater. It is a short lesson in performance technique:

> The pupils of the Joruri master, Kaganojo, once all complained to him thus. "When you, sir, are chanting, and come to the fushi passage, the audience goes into raptures. When we chant a fushi passage, however hard we try, we never get applause. Even so, it is not that we have arranged the passage for ourselves, for we have carefully learned your setting, sir. In spite of this, we get no applause; this is very mysterious." Kaganojo burst into laughter. "It is not that at all. I merely chant Joruri with no other object but chanting, and when I come to the fushi passage, I sing the fushi. As you fellows start chanting, you think of being applauded, and make your performance entertaining from beginning to end, so that when you get to the fushi, it is no longer a passage that is more entertaining than the rest, so there is no applause. It is bad to make applause the main purpose of your chanting. (Ibid., pp. 78-79.)

I think the point has been made. A certain amount of understanding is necessary for the context of these remarks to be clear, but it certainly seems true that many of the things that were said all those years ago are similar to current, western performance theory. The interesting thing is that in the abstract--separated from culture, etc.,--there are lessons to be learned about truth in performance, but the use of the form must come from a new synthesis which has that truth as its basis, as well as a connection with the audience.

It may be true that at some juncture an oriental appearance for a play would have some effect, but as Brecht knew when writing The Good Woman of Szechuan it is a resulting third form that has impact.

Perhaps a few more items, all from The Actors' Analects, with page numbers noted at the end:

A DIRECTING TECHNIQUE?

> A certain actor asked Tojuro the following question: "I myself and some other actors are in some confusion on the first day of a play, perhaps because we have not learned the words properly yet. Your performance is as though you were doing a play that you have become thoroughly familiar with over a period of ten or twenty [performances]. I should like to ask what advice you would give on this point." His reply was: "I am the same on the first day; I too am in confusion. But the reason that I seem to others as if I am playing a play I am familiar with is that when I am practicing I commit the words well to memory, and on the first day I forget them completely. However, I listen on the stage to what the other actors say to me, and then I remember my lines and speak them. The reason why I do this is that when one encounters people in the ordinary course of events, or fights or disputes with them, one has not the advantage of having lines prepared in advance. One hears what the other has to say, and then, and not before, one's reply comes to one's lips. In acting, I think that everyday life should be the model, and that is why I commit the words properly to memory and forget them when I appear on the first day. (p. 76.)

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> Tojuro said, "If you wish to be praised, the best way to set about it is to forget the audience and to concentrate on playing the play as if it was really happening." (p.79.)

Perhaps the best way to begin to conclude is with a final story which does two things: First, it gives us another teaching/directing technique, and second, it informs us about the nature of art in general, and the theater, in particular.

> Once, when Nakamura Shirogoro was in the prime of youth, he was in the same company as Yamashita Kyoemon, and the latter's performance was wonderfully successful. The audience praised him for it but that evening Sakata Tojuro met him and told him that he had been in the audience on this opening day and that he had acted extremely badly. Kyoemon felt very aggrieved at this opinion, which was completely different from the view that all the spectators had taken, and said, "If that is so, please come to the second day." Tojuro agreed and joined the audience on the second day. When Kyoemon reached the dressing room after the performance, he sent a messenger to Tojuro's box, asking him . . .

> to come and see him . . . Tojuro immediately complied . . . and addressed him in the same way . . . as . . . before. "You asked me to see the play again today, and this I have done. You really are bad." Kyoemon was very upset, and after the day's program had ended, he did not go to his own home, but immediately went to Tojuro's residence and said to him, "After your unfavorable criticism yesterday I took a great deal of trouble to improve my performance today. But it still has not pleased you, and it is not in my ability to do any better. I should like the benefit of your instruction." Tojuro replied. "If that is so, I shall speak. Nakamura Shirogoro is a young actor, at the beginning of his career. In your present program you come on before him. You are so great a success that what can Shirogoro possibly do following after you? Why do you not bear in mind the need to help young actors? (p. 126.)

So what is the end of all of this? How does the first part of this discussion, style, the convention of the Japanese theater, etc., relate to the second set of "stories" I have related? First of all, we can clearly use the advice of the great Japanese actors of the past. By applying them to our own theater and our own aesthetic, there are many valuable lessons that we can learn. But, let us not labor under the illusion that because they "sound" the same that they are. And that's the second lesson:

Because something is foreign or "exotic," that does not make it inaccessible to us, but it also does not make it fair game for second-rate imitation. We have all seen or heard of embarrassing performances in third world countries bravely trying to imitate western theater or ballet, or, sometimes worse, trying to graft these principles on to some indigineous form. Our primary reaction is nearly almost embarrassment, and later a bit of pique that the arts could be misrepresented in this way. Yet somehow we never believe that of ourselves; where other efforts are primitive and pathetic, ours are almost always avant-garde and experimental.

I am suggesting, then, that as we look for guidance to the Japanese theater, or from any other "foreign" art form, for that matter, that we should be prepared to assimilate a set of cultural realities first, and then metamorphasize that into a form. We will almost always be better off, on the approach, anyway, assimilating ideas and substance, and then allowing those ideas to induce in us the development of

a new artistic necessity which in turn will create the new style.

The interesting thing is that this new, resulting style may indeed have some of the characteristics of the one from which our necessities have come--but it also may not. What it will be is itself, and its relationship with the audience will be particular and genuine.

And sometimes that will even make it art.

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