AN HISTORICAL AND ANALYTICAL STUDY OF THE PLAYWRIGHTS' COMPANY

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by

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ABSTRACT

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OF THE PLAYWRIGHTS' COMPANY

By Warner Thomas Dahlberg

This study is intended as an historical-analytical research project on the Playwrights' Company from its beginning in 1938 through the season of 1958-59. Historically, it traces the major economic, political, and business events which influenced the Company during the twenty-year history. It analyses and evaluates the contributions made by the Playwrights' Company to the American theatre and considers the degree to which the Company achieved the goals and purposes for which it was formed.

In order to be as objective as possible, the study is based primarily on public information available through newspapers, magazines, and other published sources. A thorough search of the New York Times during the twenty years covered in the study and reference to other newspapers provided much of the information about Company activities. The Burns Mantle series The Best Plays supplied information about the plays and their production while several theatre histories were used for background material.

The collection of information on the productions of plays by the Company which is contained in the chart in

Appendix I provided a basis for the organization of work and material.

From this study has come a more thorough understanding of play production in New York and a realization of the important role which the founders of the Playwrights' Company have played in American theatre. The company which they formed in 1938 has made a major contribution to theatre in this country in terms of the plays it has produced as well as the careers it has furthered. Most important, the Playwrights' Company proved it could be successful and attained many of the goals set at its conception. This study presents information which verifies these achievements.

Approved by
David C. Ralph

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DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated in appreciation to the late Professor Donald O. Buell of Michigan State University who was its inspiration and contributor and who served its author with dedication and wise counsel.

INTRODUCTION

This study had its beginning in 1958-59 with a paper written for a course in Contemporary American theatre. At that time, the Playwrights' Company had completed its twentieth year of operations as one of the foremost producing organizations in the professional theatre. Two of the original five prominent playwrights who founded the company in 1938 were still active in its operations, Maxwell Anderson and Elmer Rice. The other three, S. N. Behrman, Sidney Howard, and Robert E. Sherwood, had departed, Mr. Behrman by resignation and the other two by death. But there still remained a significant continuity of management from the first years.

Soon after this time, in the spring of 1959, Mr. Anderson died and Mr. Rice resigned, and the last of the original five had left the management. The Playwrights' Company, although continuing its operations, had reached the end of an era. It seemed to be a propitious time to undertake a more detailed study of the organization's first two decades, and the work was begun under the direction of the late Professor Donald O. Buell.

This study is intended as an historical-analytical research project on the Playwrights' Company from its beginning in 1938 through the season of 1958-59. Histori-

cally, it traces the major economic, political, and business events which influenced the Company during the twenty-year history. This period has been selected as it is the span of years in which two or more of the original members of the board have been actively associated with determining the governing policies of the Company. It also completes two decades in which the policies of the Company have gradually changed, yet have maintained a continuing similarity of purpose and action.

Major changes in personnel and operating policy form the basis for the organization of the study into five chapters. The first chapter sets forth the conditions which obtained in the American theatre prior to 1938 and which in part motivated the formation of the group. Chapters II, III, and IV trace the Company's activities during these twenty years, and the last chapter is a summary of the conclusions drawn from this study.

Chapters II, III, and IV are established according to natural periods into which the Company's history seems to be divided by the group's activities, the conditions of the times, and associations with other theatrical people.[1] Thus Chapters II, III, and IV are arranged as follows:

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[1]This tendency of the Company's history to be divided into periods can be clearly seen in Appendix I.

II. 1938-41. The first division covers the formation of the Company and the first three seasons in which it proved that it could operate successfully.

III. 1941-50. The second period covers the ten years of World War II and the immediate recovery period.

IV. 1950-59. The third period begins with Mr. Roger L. Steven's election to membership on the board and completes the Company's history to 1958-59.

The first two periods are made up of seasons in which all or a large majority of the plays produced were written by member-playwrights. The third period reflects a change of policy which to some extent precedes the official announcement of that change. It is also noticeable that certain designers and directors appear in the various periods, tending to group the seasons into related blocks. The second period is definitely marked by limited seasons. It is on the basis of such indications derived from the record that these chapter divisions are made.

This study additionally analyses and evaluates the contributions made by the Playwrights' Company to the American theatre and considers the degree to which the Company achieved the goals and purposes for which it was formed. Such evaluation can be only tentative at this time,

for the proximity of the study to the actual events does not permit a proper historical perspective in terms of the entire theatre scene in America. However, on the basis of the record which it has made and the stated ambitions and reasons given for its formation, some conclusions can be drawn regarding the Company's success. Thus, this record which makes possible the analysis, is an integral and important part of the total study.

The important events and policy decisions which seem to have affected the course of the Company's activities comprise the major content of the study. A record of the seasons and the plays produced in each is included for its importance in determining the success of the Company, indication of trends, and the reasons for them. This record is brief, however, as a completely detailed account of each production and the various individuals involved would be both too voluminous for inclusion here and unproductive in the light of the study's purpose. Where associates of the Company seem to have been particularly significant or indicative of trends, attention is devoted to them. Brief summaries of the production record and individual associations have been included in the appendices.

The study is based primarily on public information available through newspapers, magazines, and various books dealing with the New York theatrical seasons. The New York

Times was found to be a most ready source and is probably the most widely used reference for contemporary events. The Burns Mantle The Best Plays series and Daniel Blum's Theatre World series were found useful as they recorded information about the seasons and the plays produced. Laurence Langner's The Magic Curtain supplied background material and information about the member-playwrights' associations with the Theatre Guild. Several books of the history of the American theatre also furnished valuable background material, notably Edmond Gagey's Revolution in American Drama and Barnard Hewitt's Theatre U.S.A.: 1668 to 1957.

It was found impossible to make direct contact with the two living former members of the Company, Elmer Rice and S. N. Behrman, for first-hand information. The former's recent book, The Living Theatre, was useful for some specific information. However, it was felt that a more objective viewpoint might be gained by the use of non-partisan sources. A great deal of information was gathered from the scrapbooks of the Playwrights' Company's publicity agent, William Fields, who also helped by filling in details during a personal interview.

Thus, the material for this study has been gathered to present a brief history of the Playwrights' Company. From this history is derived an analysis of the Company's importance in American theatre and its success in terms

of its goals. This analysis has been made as objectively as possible at this time considering the information available.

CHAPTER I

THE THEATRE AND THE PLAYWRIGHTS

With the death of Maxwell Anderson in February, 1959, and the resignation of Elmer Rice in April of the same year, the last of the original members have left the Playwrights' Company management. Maxwell Anderson, S. N. Behrman, Sidney Howard, Robert E. Sherwood, and Elmer Rice formed the Company in 1938 to produce their own plays. Mr. Howard died the following year, and in 1946 Mr. Behrman, dissatisfied with managerial responsibilities, resigned. The three remaining members continued with the Company until Mr. Sherwood's death in 1955 decreased the number once again.

During the twenty-year period these men were active, the Company was a leading producer on Broadway with a total of fifty-eight productions to its credit. The Company is responsible for such hits as _Abe Lincoln in Illinois_, _Tea and Sympathy_, _Dream Girl_, _The Eve of St. Mark_, _The Bad Seed_, _The Fourposter_, and _Cat on a Hot Tin Roof_. It has starred such well known personalities as Alfred Lunt and Lynn Fontanne, Katherine Cornell, Jose Ferrer, Ingrid Bergman, Helen Hayes, and Raymond Massey. In its twenty-year history the Playwrights' Company has worked with some of the most important designers in America and employed some of the top directors in the field.

Now that all of the original five members of the Company are gone from its board, there is no reason to believe that the Playwrights' Company will be dormant. Resultant changes will undoubtedly occur with a change of management. Since the change in management is completed, it is logical at this point, to take stock of what has transpired over the years: the events and achievements which have determined policies that have made the Playwrights one of the most important producing companies on Broadway.

The five playwrights, Anderson, Behrman, Howard, Rice, and Sherwood, met in the spring of 1938 to form a producing company. They were visionaries of the time and, according to William Fields, the press agent for the Company, they were the "first such group in the history of our stage to survive more than a year."[1] They planned to contribute $10,000 each and begin producing their plays. Each playwright would have Company backing as he produced his own works.

The plan was a daring one. The organization on a permanent basis was a new approach to theatrical production. Furthermore, many of the founders' contemporaries predicted sudden and disastrous failure for the venture, since play-

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[1]William Fields, Twenty Years 1938-58, Fulfillment and Promise, The Playwrights' Company Celebrates Twenty Years, News release, Issued William Field's office 1959, unpublished.

wrights were thought to be temperamental and difficult with which to work. Lewis Nichols and Charlotte Hughes, both with the New York Times, mention the "cynics" and "old guard producers" who referred to "temperamental" playwrights and foresaw a short life for the new company.[2] Eugene Burr in "The Theatre" said,

> The soothsayers had a certain amount of common sense on their side, for the Company had in its community coffers just funds enough for two shows and no more; and everyone knows that the long established and constant Broadway ratio of success is just one in five.[3]

However, the five playwrights were visionaries in still another sense. Although not denying the monetary gain they hoped to receive, they hoped that their experiment would stimulate and benefit the American stage. They were interested in presenting well-written, thought-provoking drama and hoped thus to improve the quality of production and script. According to Maxwell Anderson, they wanted to "help each other on scripts and on production problems" by a "pooling of brains and experience" which would give each of them a "better chance to say his independent say."[4]

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[2]Charlotte Hughes, "Portrait of the Big Four," New York Times, August 25, 1940, sec. 9, p. 1.
Lewis Nichols, "Dramatists on Their Own," New York Times, June 27, 1943, sec. 2, p. 1.

[3]Eugene Burr, "Anniversary," The Zeigfeld Theatre, n.d.

[4]Maxwell Anderson, "The Playwrights' Birthday," New York Times, October 10, 1948, sec. 2, p. 5.

The need these playwrights felt for a producing company of their own developed from a dislike of existing conditions in the New York theatre. These conditions had originated during the preceding century and matured in the 1920's and 1930's, the period in which Anderson, Behrman, Howard, Rice and Sherwood all started to write and develop. Elmer Rice, who was then Risenstein, was the first of the five to have a play produced. His first production was On Trial in 1914. The others appeared on Broadway soon afterwards; Robert E. Sherwood was the last to have his initial play produced, in 1926. Maxwell Anderson began writing with Laurence Stallings in 1924 when their What Price Glory was a hit, and Howard and Behrman made their debuts in 1921 and 1923, respectively. By 1926 all of the founders were active on the Broadway scene and were writing successful plays.

In order to understand better the desire to risk the hazards of independent production, a brief review of the theatre of the turn of the Century and the conditions which resulted from the twenty years prior to 1938 is necessary. Economic and national trends and reactions affected the development, and the basis these conditions in the 1930's was laid in an earlier theatre.

Edmond Gagey, in his Revolution in American Drama, describes the theatre at the beginning of this century:

> In the years before our entry into the First World War, smugly indifferent to artistic and social forces threatening its own complacency, Broadway went on its merry way, attempting to live up to its appellation of the Great White Way and dispersing entertainment to an eager public. . . . . At the sedately ornate Empire Theatre, for example, he (the playgoer) might view the latest offering of Charles Frohman, the 'Napoleon of the Drama,' with at least one of the galaxy of Frohman stars. If the eager customer happened to be interested in novelty of staging, he might attend a production by David Belasco, famed as a wizard of lighting... Belasco, too, would provide a star.... In a lighter mood the enterprising playgoer might purchase a ticket for the most recent George M. Cohan show -- review or farce -- ... or he might select one of Charles Dillingham's spectacles at the Hippodrome with such features as a parade of suffragettes.... Whatever performance was finally chosen, the Broadway seeker after amusement would know there was little chance of his being disturbed unduly by contemporary problems or driven to painful thought.[5]

The theatre of the period was one of melodramas, tearful comedy, and romances. According to Barnard Hewitt, theatre historian and professor of theatre at the University of Illinois, "The trend toward spectacular realism . . . was now the vogue in the production of Shakespeare, contemporary melodrama, or romantic drama."[6]

This theatre world was ruled by the producer. He now had become the producer-manager-director who often combined the function of all three in his own person. This producer

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[5]Edmond M. Gagey, Revolution in American Drama (New York: Columbia University Press, 1947), pp.1-2.

[6]Barnard Hewitt, Theatre U.S.A. 1668 to 1957 (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, Inc., 1959), p. 273.

could be "czar and curmudgeon to his players."[7] He often wrote or adapted his own plays or at least closely supervised their construction, and the playwright was "powerless to demand respect for the letter of his script."[8] Hewitt states that "producers and managers were comparatively free to express through the theatre their individual tastes and ideals."[9] As a result, "by the time the directors, actors, and the play doctors had finished their amputations and revisions, his (the author's) opus was often scarcely recognizable."[10]

Thus, at the turn of the Century, the producer had virtually unlimited power in his theatre. He was the dominant force: he selected the play, cast it, commissioned scenery and costumes, rented a theatre if he did not own one, directed the actors, and provided the money, often out of his own pocket, to cover production costs.[11]

For the first twenty years of the new century, the theatre remained much the same. David Belasco continued to produce until his death in 1931 and Charles Frohman was active much of that time. Both had their theatrical beginnings in the latter part of the nineteenth century and, as

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[7]Gagey, op. cit., p. 3. [8]Ibid., p. 2.

[9]Hewitt, op. cit., p. 278. [10]Gagey, op. cit., p. 2

[11]Hewitt, op. cit., p. 330.

other producers, were unhampered by the restrictions of Equity and other union control, for "theatrical unions were neither as powerful nor as exacting as they eventually became."[12] This power of the producers was further strenthened, according to Hewitt, by their financial positions and by the realistic style at which they were experts and which pleased audiences at the time.[13] This realism was the important movement in American theatre and with it the producer remained supreme.

Later in the first quarter of the century, this realism met strong opposition in the imaginative writing of Eugene O'Neill and his contemporaries, the younger men in the field of playwrighting, who worked for more truthful and imaginative expression in drama. Their work was allied with the art theatre and "the new stagecraft" so strongly advanced by Max Reinhardt, Jacques Copeau, Granville-Barker, and later, Robert Edmond Jones. These tendencies toward the use of more imagination in scripts and scenery had been developing in Europe for some time, but were new to the American stage and Belasco and others like him strongly opposed the new movement in this country, although they were unable to stem it. Anderson's poetic drama gained popularity as did the prose

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[12]Gagey, op. cit., p. 3.

[13]Hewitt, op. cit., p. 287.

of O'Neill, and their works, with those of their followers, were first produced by art theatres out of the established "Broadway" district. An emphasis on social statements and human relations typified this movement and was reflected in such works as Rice's On Trial, Anderson's Saturday's Children, and Howard's The Silver Cord, all works by men later to become originators of the Playwrights' Company.

In Gagey's words, the welcome of authors who considered themselves primarily as poets

> was made easier by theatrical events and developments between two world wars. While the little theatre movement soon lost its vitality, devoting itself more and more to the production of the previous season's Broadway successes, its mission had been accomplished and its influence lived after it. The imaginative and poetical play was taken over by progressive producers like Arthur Hopkins and by the Theatre Guild ... the Guild's success encouraged numerous other groups and organizations, among them the Equity Players, Eva Le Gallienne's Civic Repertory Theatre, the Group Theatre, the Playwrights' Company--widely different in aims but with a common dislike of the commercial play.[14]

During this period, the theatre experienced a boom which lasted until the great depression of the 1930's. Producers continued to control strongly the production of plays, the choosing of casts and stars, and the selection of designers and directors. However, with the increasing importance of Max Reinhardt and his contempories with their

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[14]Gagey, op. cit., pp. 71-2.

new stagecraft, designers and directors gained more control of production. They were, however, still at the beck and call of the man with the money. Gordon Craig's conception of the artist-director and unified production was making itself felt. But the playwright, in the American theatre, was relegated to a position of relative unimportance with little say in the matter of how his script was to be handled.

In the 1930's the movement toward a more serious and thoughtful treatment of drama and playwriting was fostered by economic developments in the nation. During the great boom years of the 1920's the average number of new productions per year on Broadway was as high as 240, as Hollywood producers added their newly acquired wealth to the Broadway production scene. Then, in the 1930-31 season, came a sudden drop to only 190 new productions.[15] During the next four years the Broadway seasons grew smaller and smaller. The number of revivals increased, and the frequency of new plays decreased along with the total count of productions. Money lost in the economic depression was no longer available for the backing of expensive plays. Producers found that it was necessary to examine carefully the

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[15]Burns Mantle, The Best Plays of 1930-31 (New York: Dodd, Mead and Company, Inc., 1931), p. 17.

scripts they proposed to present and began to rely on proven playwrights and tested patterns for scripts. Many producers quit the stage altogether.

Hollywood money was more selectively doled out and by 1936-37 began disappearing entirely. In the opinion of Mr. Mantle, this was partially due to a fight with the Dramatists' Guild regarding a more generous treatment of the playwrights.[16] Hollywood made an additional drain on the legitimate theatre by offering glowing opportunities for improving personal fortunes, and much of Broadway's personnel moved to the West Coast. Some moved only to return as conditions improved in New York, but many were to stay.

Economic conditions not only caused people to leave New York, but brought forth the formation of relief groups as well, working to provide for the large numbers of actors and other theatre people still in the city without jobs. Numerous benefits were organized with the proceeds from a night's performance going to relief organizations or to unemployed actors. It was during this period that the WPA Federal Theatre Project was created to help provide jobs. Although many theatre devotees hoped that the Project might be extended to become a national theatre, its primary func-

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[16]Burns Mantle, The Best Plays of 1936-37 (New York: Dodd, Mead and Company, Inc., 1937), p. v.

tion was to furnish work for theatre people through government subsidized productions. During the same period of depression, the Actors' Relief Fund was created. Each of these organizations, though by different means, was aimed at relieving the plight of the jobless actor and indirectly giving playwrights a chance to be heard.

The depression years were hard on playwrights. The relief programs, though providing some new productions, were not creating a ready market for scripts. As producers became more selective, it was more difficult to find financial backing for plays. Furthermore, many scripts of the younger authors "were of the type labled 'socially significant,' and while of immediate propaganda value, had no lasting interest as works of art."[17] Producers were seeking plays of immediate public interest and commercial value, and playwrights were finding it difficult to get their shows produced. Many were leaving New York or simply not writing, while new playwrights were not developing.

By 1932 with 180 productions on the boards for the season, Mantle noted that many playwrights were "sold down to Hollywood."[18] The 1936-37 yearbook again mentions the

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[17]Laurence Langner, The Magic Curtain, (New York: E. P. Dutton & Company, Inc., 1951), p. 263.

[18]Burns Mantle, The Best Plays of 1932-33 (New York: Dodd, Mead and Company, Inc., 1933), p. 10.

shortage of playwrights in New York.[19] Higher pay on the West Coast and difficult production conditions made Broadway an undesirable place to which to bring a new and imaginative script. This same exodus to Hollywood was to hinder the Playwrights' Company in the years after its formation.

With the disappearance of readily available funds and producers, an increase in the quality of productions and scripts is yearly noted by Mantle. During the 1932-33 season no more than half the theatres in New York were in use, but, "artistically the drama has made progress by sustaining previously attained levels."[20] The following season brought a new low in the number of productions, but Mantle notes that the average of failures was less and "all the better plays have represented 'good theatre'."[21] That was the season in which audiences began returning to the theatre, and the drama, "given up a little sadly but quite positively as approaching a state of rigor mortis," began to emerge.[22]

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[19]Mantle, 1936-37, op. cit., p. v.

[20]Mantle, 1932-33, op. cit., p. v.

[21]Burns Mantle, The Best Plays of 1933-34 (New York: Dodd, Mead and Company, Inc., 1934), p. v.

[22]Ibid., p. 3.

The days of the depression, which improved the quality of production and sent so many of Broadway's personnel to Hollywood, were hard on the commercial theatre and particularly hard on the playwright, and the boom period of the twenties never returned. The number of productions per season continued to decrease, despite the financial emergence. By 1936-37, many of the prominent Hollywood producers, who had been assuming larger and larger portions of the production scene in New York "went home to resume their respective places in the California sun,"[23] and the season's total was reduced to ninety. The following year was to see even fewer shows open.[24] Hollywood interests were greatly lessened by the promise of decreased profits, as a result of the new Guild Contracts. It was in the 1936-37 season, as it became increasingly difficult for a playwright to get his script produced, that the Dramatists' Guild began its battle for more prominence for the author in play production and a larger share of the profits.

The day of author's agents had not yet come, and each playwright had to make his own rounds calling on each producer and begging for production. The situation in the 1930's is described by Hewitt:

> The producer decided which plays should be produced. In order for his work to reach an audience, the

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[23] Ibid.

[24] Mantle, 1936-37, op. cit., p. v.

> playwright had to convince a producer that it would succeed in the theatre. As long as the demand for plays was large, the playwright did not often suffer under this arrangement, but when production shrank . . . and instant and lasting success became more and more essential, the beginning playwright found it all but impossible to gain a hearing. Even established playwrights found it more and more difficult to secure production for plays at all out of the pattern of past successes.[25]

Once an author's script was finally accepted for production, the producer chose the stars and production staff. The author's preferences were usually considered, but it was the producer's final decision. This practice led to Maxwell Anderson's statement that one of the things he liked most about the Playwrights' Company was that he could produce his own show as he liked--He was free![26]

The playwright's meager role in the production of his scripts and low share of the profits caused the Dramatists' Guild to begin its new contract negotiations. The negotiations indicated a general dissatisfaction of the playwright with his role in the production of his scripts.

The Dramatists' Guild's efforts were of great concern to the five playwrights in question. Sidney Howard was president of the Guild and Anderson, Sherwood, and Rice were active members. The effort preceded the Playwrights' Company's formation but expressed the same idealistic goals.

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[25]Hewitt, op. cit., p. 414. [26]Anderson, loc. cit.

Dissatisfaction with production procedures was the primary reason mentioned by the five in 1938 when they formally incorporated to produce their own plays.

Interest in a playwrights' company was first expressed in 1935 when Robert E. Sherwood, Maxwell Anderson, and Sidney Howard discussed the possibilities. Little is known of the circumstances, but the proposal came to nothing, and no actual organization was attempted. Two of the three men were later involved in the first meeting from which the Playwrights' Company developed, and the third was included in the second meeting and ultimate organization. This 1935 meeting was contemporary with the Dramatists' Guild's new contract negotiations, indicating a similarity of viewpoints.

Another indication of the dissatisfaction with Broadway conditions was Elmer Rice's efforts at production and his continued threats to leave the theatre. Following his See Naples and Die in 1929-30, as produced by Louis Gensler, he appeared on the Broadway scene in 1931-32 as his own producer with The Left Bank and Counsellor-at-Law. Until that time he had had ten plays done in legitimate theatres by ten different producers. The theatre Guild had produced one, The Adding Machine. Arthur Hopkins, William A. Brady, and Guthrie McClintic also were among those with whom he had worked. He had had one play done at Columbia University

and a one-act produced off-Broadway. Each show had been individually contracted for and each required repeated effort to get it accepted by a producer.

At the time he began producing his own scripts, Mr. Rice established a precedent for individual production which he did not break until he helped form the Playwrights' Company. Following his Counsellor-at-Law, he repeated his role as independent producer four more times. Only one of these productions was a success, Judgement Day in 1934-35. With the Playwrights' Company, he continued taking charge of the production arrangements on all of his own plays and directing each with the exception of the musical version of Street Scene in 1947 directed by Maurice Abrovanel. Mr. Rice's earlier experiences, prior to the production of The Left Bank, apparently convinced him that he was no longer interested in outside producers. This resulted in his independent efforts which were joined to those of the Playwrights' Company in 1938.

Of the four playwrights who joined Mr. Rice in forming the company, none had attempted to produce his own scripts, but each was recognized as a leading playwright on the Broadway scene. They had all worked with various producers. A large majority of their shows had been done by the Theatre Guild, but they had also worked with Arthur Hopkins, Guthrie McClintic, Gilbert Miller, William A. Brady, and others.

Though each of the producers working with these five men developed profitable relationships, the variety and number of producers involved indicates the lack of a home, which Anderson stated they were seeking by forming their own producing company.[27] No single producer stayed with any of the playwrights for any length of time, and each production was an individual problem that had to be negotiated on its own. This meant a repetition of the process of going from one office to another until the author could find someone interested in putting the script on Broadway. Unless the playwright "produced his own play in daring isolation there was no office in which he could feel at home and his business arrangements were no less transient than the run of the play."[28]

Each of the five playwrights in the Playwrights' Company began writing professionally for the stage during the time the art theatre and the new stagecraft were gaining support in America. Through the twenty years preceeding 1938, the five became leading playwrights on Broadway, and conditions developed which they wished to remedy by forming their own producing company. That their writing carried an impact can be shown by a brief review of their work.

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[27]Anderson, loc. cit. [28]Ibid.

Elmer Rice was immediately successful with his On Trial when it appeared in 1914. His next success, produced in 1920, was Wake Up Jonathan. Later he returned to subjects dealing with the law practice which he knew, and he scored with It Is the Law. However, he is better known for his experimental work in The Adding Machine and his realistic Street Scene, the latter produced in 1929. With his independent productions, Mr. Rice was less successful and the first two, The Left Bank and Counsellor-at-Law, produced in 1921-22, were the only big hits.

The Adding Machine was a sociological review of which Hewitt says, "Elmer Rice had presented his critical view. . . in dry, chard expressionistic symbols, not without mordant humor, but predominantly emotional."[29] In Street Scene, he again dealt with sociological problems in a different and highly successful manner.

The most prolific writer of the group was Sidney Howard. He had had twenty plays produced by various individuals and groups. One interesting group, made up of Kenneth McGowan, Robert Edmond Jones, and Eugene O'Neill, produced his translation from the French of The Last Night of Don Juan. They had also produced Maxwell Anderson's Outside Looking In in 1925.

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[29]Hewitt, op. cit., p. 353.

Maxwell Anderson is best known for his poetic drama as exemplified in Elizabeth the Queen and Mary of Scotland. His first play, The White Desert, in 1923-24 was a failure, but in 1924 his What Price Glory, written with Laurence Stallings, ran for 299 performances and was followed by Outside Looking In and, after several failures, Saturday's Children, both running over a hundred performances. Probably his best-known play is Winterset, a poetical treatment of the Sacco-Vanzetti case which was produced in 1935 and ran for 179 performances returning the following season. He scored again the next year with the imaginative High Tor which ran for 171 performances and the successful The Wingless Victory, followed in 1937 by The Star Wagon which ran for 223 performances.

The last of the playwrights to make his appearance on Broadway was Robert E. Sherwood. His first play, The Road to Rome, ran for 159 performances and firmly established Sherwood on the Broadway scene. By 1938 he had provided only nine scripts for Broadway producers but of these nine, six ran over one hundred performances. Idiot's Delight, starring Alfred Lunt and Lynn Fontanne and produced by the Theatre Guild, returned a second season to run for 179 performances after an initial run of ninety-seven performances while The Petrified Forest and The Queen's Husband were also well received.

Of the ten plays S. N. Behrman had written prior to 1938, only two could be counted real failures. His Biography was a great success in 1932-33 and returned the following season to run for sixteen performances after an opening season of 219. His The Second Man, Brief Moment, and End of Summer all ran over a hundred performances. Amphityron '38, an adaptation from the French of Giraudoux, was done by the Theatre Guild for Alfred Lunt and Lynn Fontanne and was another of his big successes. Behrman was well regarded on Broadway and was considered one of the foremost playwrights in the field of comedy.

The five playwrights who in 1938 formed the Playwrights' Company, were, by their prolific and imaginative writing, among the top authors in New York by the time they decided to produce their own scripts. They had scored and missed, but continued to provide numerous scripts of good quality which they had to market one by one. With the depression years, they found the control of the producer and the sparse financial returns which the playwrights received a deterrent to the type of writing which they desired to do. Their dissatisfaction finally expressed itself in the effort of Sherwood, Anderson, and Howard in 1935 to become their own producers. It was also evident in the action of Mr. Rice who refused to submit to others' production methods and set out for himself.

Thus, it can be seen that the conditions which caused these feelings on the part of such playwrights were a result of the economic system which developed after 1900. The producer was supreme at the turn of the century. During the 1920's and early 1930's the advance of the art theatre and new stagecraft tended to give importance to directors and designers, lessening the vice-grip which producers had held earlier. Their power was limited even more by the growing strength of Actors Equity and the Dramatists' Guild. However, in 1938, conditions still existed under which Maxwell Anderson, S. N. Behrman, Sidney Howard, Elmer Rice, and Robert E. Sherwood felt they could not work.

It has been necessary to trace the history of the American Theatre very briefly since 1900 and these playwrights' parts in it in order to explain the reasons behind their move in the formation of a playwrights' producing company. As a result of the conditions traced in this beginning chapter, the five men set out on a new venture of their own to try to remedy the faults which they found in the existing theatre of their time.

CHAPTER II

THE FORMATION AND FIRST THREE YEARS

Formal organization of the Playwrights' Company took place in the spring of 1938. The news release announcing their intentions was followed by a description of the season planned for the fall. Maxwell Anderson, S. N. Behrman, Sidney Howard, Elmer Rice, and Robert E. Sherwood were the five playwrights involved, with John F. Wharton acting as legal advisor and member of the board. Wharton drew up the necessary papers for formal organization, and the Company was on its way.

The Company was organized on the basis that each playwright would personally supervise the production of his own plays. He could direct them himself or, if he preferred, he could engage someone else to direct them. However, he was in complete control of the total production even though he could call in the other members for advice and suggestions. This was often done, and the playwrights seem to have managed well among themselves and to have held a mutual respect and admiration for each other that made work with the company a pleasure. It was agreed that any play by a member of the company should receive production; generally, however, scripts which did not meet the approval

of the group were not produced and could be taken to another producer. Only two, Truckline Cafe by Anderson and Dunnigan's Daughter by Behrman were subsequently taken to other producers. Rejections, apparently, were well accepted by their authors.

The idea for the formation of such a company was first considered by Anderson, Sherwood, and Howard in 1935, but did not grow into operation. A stormy meeting of the Dramatists' Guild apparently set the idea into motion again. Following the meeting, Rice, Sherwood, and Anderson met to discuss the subject. Rice reports that the plan was simply mentioned,[1] but Sherwood told the story with more detail. Fact or imagination, it was an interesting evening. Anderson and Sherwood did not know Mr. Rice too well, as he "had quit the Broadway theatre several years before, angered by what seemed to him its shocking indifference to serious playwriting." Rice was known for his frequent but short retirements, and, according to Sherwood, Rice was asked when he was going to return to the theatre. His reply was, "When there exists a theatre that's attractive enough to get back into." This prompted the disclosure of the desire of Mr. Anderson and Mr. Sherwood to form a producing company of playwrights.[2] Rice apparently liked the idea, and

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[1]Rice, loc. cit.

[2]Seymour Peck, "Mr. Sherwood Discusses a Combine," New York Times, December 28, 1952, sec. 2, p. 1.

several meetings followed in which Sidney Howard and S. N. Behrman were included as well as John F. Wharton, their legal consultant. According to Lawrence Langner, Eugene O'Neill was also asked to join but declined as he was working on his cycle of six long plays.

Before the summer departure from New York, arrangements had been made with each author for a script for the following season. Sidney Howard was working on Summer Night, a title which never appeared on Broadway, while Maxwell Anderson was in California working with Kurt Weill on a musical, Knickerbocker Holiday. Rice spent the summer of 1938 in Athens, Greece, working on a second play. He had already completed The Siege of Berlin which was never produced. His American Landscape was eventually presented for production in the first season.

According to official press releases, these playwrights formed their own producing company because of "existing conditions." "Mr. Anderson early took a dislike to the power that producers had to choose and reject the plays," according to the Times' statement made at his death in 1959.[4] He was interested in a "local habitation" in

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[3]Lawrence Langner, The Magic Curtain (New York: E. P. Dutton and Company, Inc., 1951), p. 268.

[4]New York Times, March 1, 1959, p. 84.

which the playwright could, "put an end to . . . migratory careers."[5] Sherwood, on the other hand, has stated that the Company was "largely an expression of grievance against the Theatre Guild."[6]

These statements do not conflict if it is understood that all of the playwrights, excepting Rice, had been very active with the Theatre Guild and this organization was representative of the existing power of the producers. While they were quite active with the Guild, having done some eighteen shows for the group, these playwrights had no surety that it would produce their shows. This made it necessary for them to "sell" each script individually and bargain with other producers. At no time did they have any standing agreement with a producer which lasted for a period extending beyond the "run-of-the-show." Thus, the playwright never had any assurance that he would be able to get a show produced and never knew with whom he would be able to work. The problem became a double one in that it was difficult to get a show produced and once it was contracted, the author had very little to say about how it was to be handled and who would be engaged to direct, design, and star in the play.

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[5]Maxwell Anderson, "Author Looks Back Over Ten Years and Concludes That the Hopes of His Company Have Been Fulfilled," New York Times, October 10, 1948, sec. 2, p. 2.

[6]Peck, loc. cit.

According to a statement by Elmer Rice written at the Company's formation, the group "had no quarrel with any individual or group of individuals," nor was there "any chip upon our collective shoulder."[7] The statement was made at a time in which tempers might have been involved had a strong denoucement been made against any group in New York. However, on the basis of the Sherwood statement and the stand taken by Mr. Langner in his autobiography,[8] the theory that at least Sherwood, Anderson, Howard, and Behrman might have been dissatisfied with their recent associations with the Theatre Guild seems to hold some truth. Subsequent indications, however, point to the fact that it was not the Theatre Guild alone, but tendencies possibly represented by it and other producers collectively which caused the playwrights to break off on their own.

The Theatre Guild, at the time of the playwrights' incorporation, was having difficulties. Depression years had taken their toll and, while some of the productions were successful, others failed, and "those that failed were dire failures."[9] Many of the Guild's subscription cities had dropped out of its circuit, thus limiting resources from which to draw, and tensions within its

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[7]Rice, loc. cit. [8]Langner, op. cit., p. 268.

[9]Langner, op. cit., p. 257.

management became apparent while tempers often flared. Such internal problems made production problems more difficult to solve, and it was in this respect that the playwrights would have been involved. The Theatre Guild's policy of having two board members serve as production committee while the Board as a whole participated in productions broke down into constant bickering between the Board, the committee, the authors, and the actors. Added to that, certain Board members had even suggested that the Theatre Guild be dissolved entirely.[10] As problems developed in the Board and committee, relations with authors and actors were strained, causing discouragement and dissatisfaction among casts and generally disrupting production schedules. Anderson reports that the Board, made up of Laurence Langner, Theresa Helburn, Maurice Wertheim, Lee Simonson, Philip Moeller, and Helen Westley, "would descend on rehearsals and fight among themselves and fight with the author and get the actors and the director demoralized."[11]

The Playwrights' Company's incorporation was an added hardship, for it left the Theatre Guild without four of its major playwrights. Problems in the Theatre Guild were such in 1938 that, after the playwrights had organized, Langner approached the group and suggested "somewhat bitterly" that

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[10]Langner, op. cit., p. 273. [11]Peck, loc. cit.

they take over its subscription series, "since I saw little prospect of the Guild being able to run the theatre."[12] However, the offer was not accepted and during the spring and summer of 1939 plans for a "new regime" were drawn up by the Guild Board.[13]

Antagonism with the Theatre Guild, if it existed, was soon quieted, for during their second season in 1939-40, the Playwrights' Company enlisted the cooperation of the Theatre Guild on There Shall Be No Night. Langner, in his book, says that the Guild asked Mr. Sherwood to revise his Acropolis for the Lunts, but that instead Mr. Sherwood presented the famous couple with a new play in which they were very interested. Alfred Lunt was raised by a Finnish stepfather and, as There Shall Be No Night was a declaration of the Finn's bravery during the Russian invasion, he felt the play was of immediate and timely importance.[14] It was produced by the Theatre Guild and the Playwrights' Company jointly as the Theatre Guild had the Lunts under contract and thus would have to be represented in any production in which they took part. The play scored an immediate hit and ran for 181 performances.

Joint efforts with the Theatre Guild were repeated in 1941 and 1942 as well. Anderson's Candle in the Wind and

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[13]Langner, op. cit., p. 274. [14]Langner, op. cit., p. 327

Behrman's The Pirate carried the names of the Theatre Guild and the Playwrights together. However, both productions starred actors which the Guild had under contract at the time. In order to get these actors it was necessary to enlist its aid. Helen Hays, for many years a leading actress with the Theatre Guild, played in Candle in the Wind for Mr. Anderson while the Lunts starred in The Pirate. The necessity of working with the Theatre Guild to obtain the Lunts and other actors under contract to this producing company was to occur several more times in subsequent years.

Beside the two reasons already given for the Company's formation, (a) the playwright's difficulty in getting a script produced, and (b) as an "expression of grievance against the Theatre Guild," Anderson indicates an additional closely related cause. Maxwell Anderson wanted an office where he could feel "at home." He cited the instances in the seventeenth century in which the "best writing that was done for the stage" was done by men "who were associated with stable producing companies composed of playwrights and actors."[15] He hoped that in the "home" which they would establish, they would be able to help each other with scripts and production problems. He felt that it would be to the advantage of all "to work with craftsmen whose work

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[15]Anderson, loc. cit.

we respected and whose advice was always worth considering because it came out of long experience in playwriting."[16]

Elmer Rice, on the other hand, stressed the business possibilities of the venture. He, too, was dissatisfied with the difficulty involved in getting a show produced. However, he saw it from a more practical viewpoint in his explanation of the Company's formation written in 1938. He admitted that they had no "immediate program," but stated that the "practical considerations" had to do with their wish "to have our plays produced as well and as advantageously to ourselves as possible." Play producing is "one of the most precarious of all enterprises," but "There is no reason why play-producing should be quite as haphazard, quite as hit or miss, quite as much of a gambling enterprise as it is."[17] He found practical reasons for the company's incorporation. Such a program would leave out the middle-man in the production scheme. It would also allow the playwrights to share the profits to a larger extent. "The coordination of these elements, (financing, theatre bookings, actors, etc.) is the managerial function," he said, and "if a playwright or a group of playwrights can successfully do the job, there seems no good reason why he or they should not pocket the resultant profits."[18] This seemed to him good business,

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[16] Ibid.

[17] Rice, loc. cit.

[18] Ibid.

and the success of the company has indicated that it was.

Mr. Rice also added another practical reason and an idealistic one to his explanation for their company. He states that the group was drawn together by "common interest." The fact that they were interested in good theatre and advantageous production of good plays made their cooperation in a closer bond natural. Each of the five was interested in the democratic way of life, human relations, human freedoms and the opportunity to present his ideas in production. The plays of each of these men had firmly established these interests.

The ideal which Mr. Rice gave as a reason for their corporation dealt with new and promising playwrights. The group hoped that they would be able to "create opportunities and provide training for young playwrights, young actors, young directors."[19] This could be done with "Teamwork and with the kind of enthusiasm that is generated among individuals engaged in a common enterprise." With enthusiasm and new talent, the playwrights hoped to be able to present high quality theatre. They wanted to "bring back the theatre to those who are hungry for it . . . and to introduce to it those who have never tasted its delights."[20] These were great and ambitious hopes and indicated that

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[19] Ibid.

[20] Ibid.

the group was truly made up of visionaries with desire and foresight for the future.

The lack of definite statements from Mr. Behrman and Mr. Howard prevents a clear view of their reasons for entering the company and their hopes with regard to its program. However, it can be assumed that their very affiliation with the three others who have expressed definite views indicated they were in agreement and in sympathy with statements which are available.

As for S. N. Behrman, Mr. Sherwood states that the other four "had great difficulty persuading Behrman to come into the company--and great difficulty keeping him in."[21] Behrman resigned in 1946, expressing a dislike for the time which production required. He was interested in writing and was not interested in managerial activities.[22] However, had he not held similar views with the others in the beginning, there is room to doubt that he would have let the others talk him into participating in such an undertaking.

Interests among the five playwrights were similar enough so that the company survived its first year and continued to operate. William Fields reported that in August 1939 the members of the group were getting along

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[21]Peck, loc. cit.

[22]Sam Zolotow, "Behrman Resigns from Stage Unit," New York Times, June 24, 1946, p. 27.

well together and were being quite "faithful in attendance at business sessions and production conferences. Very few of these seances have had fewer than four of the five present."[23] S. N. Behrman was elected the first president and was the only one to have his name printed on the door. Reportedly, he was elected at a meeting from which he was the only one absent. John F. Wharton usually presided at Board meetings regardless of who was president at the time.[24]

Mr. Rice and Mr. Sherwood appear to have been the members with the most business interest. Maxwell Anderson usually attended Board meetings throughout his career with the company, but was not often involved with other business matters. Behrman, despite his early start as president, was the least interested in company business and preferred to stay out of the office. As for Howard, he was only with the company for one year prior to his death. Mr. Anderson, in a report on the company in later years, said that Howard had a real business sense and, had he been with them longer, they might have been able to prevent S. N. Behrman from resigning, as Howard often liked the work in which Behrman preferred not to take part.[25] The Company's Board was not

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[23]William Fields, "Here's a Rookie Batting .750 First Time Up," New York Herald Tribune, August 6, 1939, p. u.k.

[24]Interview with William Fields, Press Agent for the Playwrights' Company, July 23, 1959.

[25]Anderson, loc. cit.

to be without its disagreements, but the playwrights were able to get along well enough together to stay in operation for twenty years.

In the fall of 1938 following their incorporation, the playwrights all returned to New York. Their first production, which opened on October 15, was Sherwood's Abe Lincoln in Illinois. It starred Raymond Massey and was an immediate hit. The play ran for several seasons and had a coast-to-coast tour. With Abe Lincoln, the Company had a great beginning for it represented the type of cooperation and quality which the playwrights had hoped to achieve. Elmer Rice, as a member of the Company, directed the show and the facts that it was so well received and won the Pulitzer Prize for 1939 well indicate its success.

Of the four productions done by the Playwrights' in their first season, three were on democratic themes. The playwrights had desired a theatre in which they would be able to have their say regarding patriotism and human relations in their own way. With three plays their first season dealing with American democratic themes in a time of world strife and a period of indecision and controversy in this country, these men were making their stand and voicing their opinions. Europe was already in the midst of war, and the United States was debating isolationism or war.

Summer announcements indicated that the first production by the new company would be Knickerbocker Holiday. Maxwell Anderson in association with the composer Kurt Weill wrote the script, but it was not ready soon enough to have the distinction of being first and opened on October 19, just four days after Abe Lincoln. It was the second success for the Company and, with two under their belt, their season got off to a good start.

The first disappointment of the Playwrights' career came in December of the first season with Elmer Rice's American Landscape. The play, directed by the author, ran for only 42 performances. Its patriotic theme did not take on Broadway.

To conclude the season of 1938-39 the Company opened S. N. Behrman's No Time for Comedy. It was another first for the Company, for it was their first co-production with Katherine Cornell who starred with Laurence Olivier. The play ran for a total of 185 performances. It closed a season in which the group proved that they could not only get along together well but could operate in the black. A season in which three out of four productions were considered hits was a record of which no one could complain. Sidney Howard was the only one of the five who had not provided a script for this season.

The success of the first season allowed the Playwrights' Company to offer Christmas bonuses to the casts and crews of the production running during the holidays. They also found that they could move their offices from their original site at 230 Park Avenue to the thirty-eighth floor of the International Building, Rockefeller Center, and send dividends to their stockholders. With the first year so well received, the Company made tentative plans for the following season and, having concluded business matters, left for their summer retreats. Behrman went West to Hollywood as did Howard. Anderson was in New England, while Sherwood and Rice left for Europe, Rice going to Paris and Sherwood heading for London.

During the summer, William Fields, the Company's press representative, kept the newspapers well supplied with reports of plans for the following season. The Tribune mentioned that they had a full "budget" for 1939-40, "fuller probably than any other one company theatrical budget in the stage world today."[26] Indications which would cause such a statement can be drawn from summer activities of the playwrights. Howard was working on two plays. His Summer Night, which had been planned for the first season, was renamed Madam, Will You Walk and prepared for a fall

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[26]Herbert Drake, "The Playbill," New York Herald Tribune, July 30, 1939.

opening. He had also started another script on the life of Benjamin Franklin. Rice was again working on The Siege of Berlin and another drama, both of which he planned to have ready when he returned to New York. Sherwood had a script in preparation, and Maxwell Anderson was ready with another musical and his Key Largo.

Despite such bright prospects, the season proved to be of minor importance. However, it was sufficient to prove that the Playwrights' Company was still active and healthy. Howard's Madam, Will You Walk closed out of town. Paul Muni had been on the West Coast for seven years and returned specifically for the Anderson play, receiving excellent notices. Even though the critics were more reserved regarding the script, the play had a successful run. Supporting Mr. Muni were two young actors, later to become stars, Jose Ferrer and Uta Hagen.

Sherwood's There Shall be No Night was the other hit of their second season. It was produced with the Theatre Guild in order to star Alfred Lunt and Lynn Fontanne. The show won the Pulitzer Prize for 1940 and was well received by critics and public alike. It took a stand on controversial issues and definitely established Mr. Sherwood's view toward America's duty in world affairs.

The Company stepped into world affairs on its own during the season. On Memorial Day, the proceeds from the

plays which the Company had playing were sent to Polish Relief. Two thousand, four hundred ninety-eight dollars were collected from Key Largo, There Shall Be No Night, No Time for Comedy, and Abe Lincoln in Illinois, the latter two plays having been held over from the preceding season.[27]

With the reurn of Abe Lincoln in Illinois, the Company was also able to put into action one of its more idealistic goals. In an effort to present good theatre to more people, the Company moved the play to a larger house and by so doing could offer it for lower prices aimed at a wider audience. Prices for tickets ran from 55¢ to a top of $1.10.

This season saw the Company planning to extend its span of operations to radio. The original plan was to go into production on September 13. Original shows, as well as the playwrights' own, would be presented over radio on the last half of the Star Theatre program sponsored by Texaco. The Columbia Broadcasting Company was to handle the shows.[28] Later the plans were put off until the following fall and eventually discarded altogether.

The tragedy of the 1939-40 season and one to present a continued loss to the Company was the death of Sidney

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[27]"Playwrights' Aid Finns and Poles," New York Daily Mirror, December 8, 1939.

[28]New York Times, August 18, 1939, p. 17.

Howard on August 23, 1939. He was killed in an accident on his farm in Tyringham, Massachusetts. At the time, his Madame, Will You Walk was in rehearsal and Benjamin Franklin was still being written. Madame, Will You Walk was delayed and, when finally opened in Baltimore, was not considered satisfactory for a New York opening. It closed in Washington on November 27. Robert Sherwood was to have finished Benjamin Franklin but it was later decided that the script should be put off for a season and it never reached production.

Mr. Howard had been an important part of the theatre since 1924, and, although active with the Playwrights' Company for only a year, had made himself a definite asset, particularly when dealing with production matters. His death was a great personal loss to his associates and a great professional loss to the Company.

As an expression of their respect and feeling of loss for him, the Company established the Sidney Howard Memorial Award in the spring of 1940. The award reflected their interest in new playwrights and their desire to help and encourage them in the professional theatre. It carried a cash prize of $1,500 for a young playwright who, "without previous substantial success in the theatre, had one or more plays produced during the season."[29] The first winner

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[29]"Ardrey Received the Howard Prize," New York Times, April 15, 1940, p. 21.

of the prize was Robert Ardrey for his Thunder Rock, produced in 1940. It was awarded on the basis of his 1939-40 season and previous plays, Star-Spangled, How to Get Tough About It, and Casey Jones in which he had shown "a genuine talent for the theatre which merits every possible encouragement."[30]

A New York release soon after Mr. Howard's death stated that several playwrights were interested in his position with the Company and that Philip Barrie had been "guessed at" as the one most likely to be included.[31] However, the membership did not change, although Mr. Barrie was officially considered by the Board.[32]

The 1940-41 season was the last before the nation became involved in World War II. The playwrights were active off Broadway as well as on. All of them had been alert in foreseeing the coming struggle and urging their country to be prepared and stand firm. Each season the Company produced plays which dealt with the problem at hand. In this last season prior to actual warfare, the Playwrights' produced Rice's Flight to the West. Its theme was timely, pleading for strong action and democratic principles. Anderson's Journey to Jerusalem and Behrman's The Talley Method

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[30] Ibid.

[31] New York Daily News, February 6, 1940.

[32] Fields Interview.

completed the season but were not enthusiastically received. The season as compared to its predecessors was disappointing.

During this 1940-41 season, prior to the United States involvement in actual fighting, Sherwood was already busy urging that the nation mobilize and employing his eloquence to oppose such anti-war supporters as Colonel Lindberg and General Robert E. Wood. At the same time he was active with Behrman in the campaign for Roosevelt while Maxwell Anderson was working for the election of Wendell Wilkie. The playwrights were not only interested in putting their views on stage, but were willing to stand behind them and actively support them in the political world.

The first period discussed in this chapter and including the Company's formation and the first three years, is characterized by the use of member-playwright scripts exclusively. Ten plays were produced by the Playwrights' Company during this time. Each of the playwrights except Sidney Howard provided several scripts, two each from Robert Sherwood and S. N. Behrman and three each from Elmer Rice and Maxwell Anderson. The Company's first musical, prepared by Mr. Anderson with the help of Kurt Weill, was produced during this period.

Of the ten shows, six were directed by Mr. Rice, while Guthrie McClintic directed two. Alfred Lunt was the director of the show, <u>There Shall Be No Night</u>, in which he

and Lynn Fontanne were starred. The musical, Knickerbocker Holiday, was directed by Joshua Logan.

It is interesting to note that Mr. Rice was active as a director as well as a playwright-producer. He had previously directed most of his own shows following Street Scene in 1929. He directed all of his own plays which the Playwrights produced in this first period, and he also handled one each for Sherwood, Behrman, and Anderson. He directed all productions of the Company during the 1940-41 season. In later seasons other directors were used, while Mr. Rice limited himself to working only on his own scripts.

This early period is also distinctive in that the Company used Jo Mielziner almost exclusively as designer. Eight out of the ten productions were designed by Mr. Mielziner. The exceptions were Sherwood's There Shall Be No Night, designed by Richard Whorf, and Rice's American Landscape, for which Aline Bernstein designed the setting. The Company began to use many different designers in other periods, and Mr. Mielziner's name appears less and less in connection with Playwrights' Company productions.

With the conclusion of their third year, the Playwrights' Company members had proven that they could work together and could produce their own plays successfully. They had produced a total of ten scripts by members of the Company. Of those ten, six were hits, two had won Pulitzer

Prizes, one was a moderate success. Only one play had closed before coming to New York. The playwrights had presented their plays on stage in the manner which they felt would most advantageously present their views. In a very real sense, they had tried to fulfill the desires and dreams which they had expressed with the Company's conception.

CHAPTER III

THE WAR YEARS AND POST-WAR DEVELOPMENTS

The season of 1941-42 opened in a nation at peace and ended in a nation ajar with delayed preparation and armament for the war in which it was already taking part. For the theatre it marked a year of depression. Broadway was in an uproar and, according to Brock Pemberton, the New York Times reporter, the theatre was "picking up the pieces" far into the following season. In December of 1941 he stated,

> Except for the hits protected by advance sales, audiences dwindled to nothing and lobby lines for successful attractions disappeared. Engagements have been cut short, bookings shifted, plays closed and abandoned, domestic political gags and dialogue deleted, while house staffs have been coached in blackout and bombing procedures.[1]

For the Playwrights' Company such conditions began a slump which was to continue until the following decade and which formed the second period in the Company's history. This was a period of slim seasons and busy men.

This second period, including the years from 1942 to 1949, generally indicates two trends. The first trend is noticeable during the war years. Other designers and directors began to appear in connection with Company productions. Between 1941 and 1945, Howard Bay became the major

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[1]Brock Pemberton, New York Times, December 28, 1941, sec. 9, p. 1.

designer, preparing four plays for the Company. Joe Mielziner continued to work with the Playwrights, but in five seasons he designed only three productions.

Following the war four shows were designed by Mr. Mielziner, and Howard Bay does not appear between 1946 and 1950. Lee Simonson, Donald Oenslager, and George Jenkins each set a play for the Company during the latter years of this decade. Lee Simonson designed Joan of Lorraine; Mr. Oenslager did Kanin's The Smile of the World; and Mr. Jenkins did the settings for Anderson's Lost in the Stars. Lemuel Ayers and Boris Aronson were the designers who appeared with Mr. Mielziner and Mr. Bay in the years between 1941 and 1945. Lemuel Ayers designed The Pirate by Behrman, and Boris Aronson did Anderson's Truckline Cafe.

Over this period of 1941-50, directorial policies of the Company changed also. Whereas in the early period most of the productions were directed by Mr. Rice, he directed only two plays between 1941 and 1946, and he did not direct any during the second part of the decade. It may be noticed also that the two which he did direct were his own scripts. He did not handle scripts by any other author following 1941. However, during the ten years following 1941, numerous new names appear on the Company's record as directors. Garson Kanin directed The Rugged Path and The Smile of the World, while Alfred Lunt, Michael Gordon, Harold Clurman, H. C.

Potter, Maurice Abrovanel, and others directed productions. Joshua Logan and Guthrie McClintic, who had directed plays for the Company in its first three seasons, did not return during this decade.

The second trend involves changes in Company policy in the seasons of 1943 and 1949. The Company did not officially announce a change in policy regarding the use of scripts by non-member authors until 1951. However, the first play under Company production by an outside author was Sidney Kingsley's The Patriots in 1943. It was not followed by another play by an outsider until 1949 when Garson Kanin's The Smile of the World was produced. From that time on, each season included more and more plays produced for outside authors.

The period from 1942 to 1949 began slowly for the Playwrights' Company. During the first season, the Company produced only one play, Candle in the Wind by Maxwell Anderson. The Theatre Guild had been arranging for Helen Hays to tour with Twelfth Night, but she felt that the Anderson play "had an important message for the war,"[2] so the Guild and the Playwrights' Company co-produced the play. It met little enthusiasm, although it ran for 135 performances. Langner says that Candle in the Wind "ran its course briefly, its

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[2]Lawrence Langner, The Magic Curtain (New York: E. P. Dutton and Company, Inc., 1951), p. 335.

flickering flame unable to withstand for long the cool winds of Broadway."[3] However, Mantle reported that it "found an interested and considerable public."[4] The production later toured and was considered a success by the Company.

The slack season and those immediately following it are best explained by the beginning of the war and the transfer of energies to the war effort. Robert Sherwood was probably the most active of the playwrights in that respect. He was made deputy coordinator of information for the government and also wrote numerous pleas for more active participation on the home front. Maxwell Anderson was also doing some writing about the war effort and was involved in personal matters.[5] Behrman disliked production problems. As a result, Elmer Rice was the only one actively engaged in Company management much of the time.

The newly established Sidney Howard award for young playwrights was passed during the year 1941. The playwrights could not agree upon a deserving new author. It was later given to the New School of Social Research to produce Winter Soldiers. Although this did not comply with the terms of the

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[3]Ibid.

[4]Burns Mantle, The Best Plays of 1941-42 (New York: Dodd, Mead and Company, 1942), p. 5.

[5]Robert Coleman, "Playwrights' Company Reviews Its Sixteen Years," The Sunday Mirror, February 14, 1954, n.p.

memorial, it was felt that this use of the money was justified by making possible a new play which otherwise might not have seen production.

The following season, 1942-43, found Sherwood even more actively participating in the affairs of government as the director of the overseas branch of the Office of War Information. His work took him to London and Africa and left him little time for Company activities.

The other authors in the Playwrights' Company were also busy with activities which kept them away from New York. Elmer Rice was working with Metro Goldwyn Mayer in Hollywood and was also busy attacking the Post Office censorship. Throughout his career, Mr. Rice disliked the power of the Post Office to censor scripts and was active in fighting this control. He was also an active member of the Writers' War Board. Mr. Behrman was preparing a script of Quo Vadis for Greta Garbo and was doing war service work. John F. Wharton, legal counsel for the Company, was taking part in Civilian Defense activities. Philip Stevenson, an assistant, took over the activities of William Fields, the Company's publicity agent who joined the Canadian army.

S. N. Behrman and Maxwell Anderson both had scripts which the Company produced during the season, The Pirate and The Eve of St. Mark. However, Broadway activity was still hampered by the war, and the Playwrights' Company felt the

need for all of its board to be active. Anderson had written The Eve of St. Mark earlier for the National Theatre Conference. Its acceptance by conference audiences was good, and the Company exercised its option to bring it to Broadway.[6] It was well received, but suffered from the fact that it was a war play. Mantle states that by the 1942-43 season plays of the Second World War had almost been "bombed out."[7] By January Mr. Anderson had decided to go to Africa to obtain material for another play.

The Pirate was the second play produced during the season by the Playwrights' Company. It opened at the Martin Beck Theatre on November 25, 1942. The play ran for 177 performances, and its popularity was due more to its stars, Alfred Lunt and Lynn Fontanne, than to the play itself, according to Burns Mantle.[8] The Pirate was published by Random House in the spring of 1943 and carried an introduction by Mr. Behrman which was a tribute to Ludwig Felda, the author of the book from which this play was taken.[9]

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[6]Burns Mantle, The Best Plays of 1942-43 (New York: Dodd, Mead and Company, 1943), p. 5.

[7]Ibid., p. 68.

[8]Ibid., p. 8.

[9]"Behrman Tribute to Fulda," The New York Times, February 7, 1943, sec. II, p. 1.

The third play of the season was a departure from the Company's previous unofficial policy of producing only scripts by member authors. It was the first of a series of departures which eventually led to a general acceptance of scripts by non-members. This seems to have been a delayed effort to begin actively supporting young authors, which was one of the company's original purposes. It also helped to bolster a very slim season caused by the absence of the member playwrights from Broadway.

The Patriots by Sidney Kingsley opened in the early part of 1943. The author was first known for his Men in White in 1933-34. He had also written Dead End and The World We Make. The Patriots, originally entitled Thomas Jefferson, was begun four years prior to its production and was completed while its author was in the army. Rowland Stebbins became interested in the script and suggested it to the Playwrights' Company. The play was presented with Mr. Stebbins as co-producer.

The Patriots was a definite success, receiving good notices from the New York critics. It closed a season in which the Playwrights' Company produced three plays, two with other producers. All of them were hits, making a very successful season despite the war.

During this season, 1942-43, another blow was dealt to the theatres which would be felt in later years. Losses

on capital investments were made non-deductible when not associated with regular business. This made production investments in relatively small amounts an even more expensive gamble in the event of a show's failure. The result was a tendency toward fewer small investors in theatrical ventures, leaving only those "angels" who could afford to lose on a show and still pay the income tax on the investment. This tended to limit the backers of theatrical endeavors to large investors with extensive capital.

Following the three-hit season of 1942-43, the 1943-44 season was a dire failure. Mr. Sherwood was overseas and unavailable. Mr. Anderson returned from Africa and brought with him Storm Operation, which received extensive publicity due to the author's unusual efforts to get his material. The play was not accepted by the Broadway audience and closed after twenty-three performances. The other production was Rice's A New Life. It opened in September, starring Betty Field, the author's wife, and ran for only sixty-nine performances. One scene took place in an operating room. Mantle states that "some little stir and a slight embarrassment" was caused by the scene and the play "had a struggle."[10]

While the Playwrights' Company was having difficulties with the two plays it produced, The Theatre Guild presented

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[10]Burns Mantle, The Best Plays of 1943-44 (New York: Dodd, Mead and Company, 1944), p. 6.

Behrman's Jacobowsky and the Colonel. The play received favorable notices and was a success. Behrman's reasons for taking it to The Theatre Guild are unknown but apparently it had not been offered to the Playwrights for production.

By 1944-45, the Company was definitely showing its need for its playwright members. During this season it was unable to produce a single play. Robert Sherwood resigned his post in the Office of War Information to assist in the re-election of President Roosevelt. In March of 1945 he toured the Pacific as a temporary assistant to the Secretary of the Navy. Later, Variety reported that it was "understood" that Mr. Sherwood was working on a biography of President Roosevelt for Metro Goldwyn Mayer.[11] Mr. Rice was still involved in the censorship problem, and Mr. Anderson was busy with personal efforts related to the war.

By 1945, Robert Sherwood had found enough time during his speech-writing for President Roosevelt to write another play which the Playwrights' Company opened in November. The Rugged Path was directed by Garson Kanin and was one of two failures during the season. Maxwell Anderson's Truckline Cafe opened in February of 1946. It was heavily criticized and closed after thirteen performances.

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[11]"Sherwood Working on F.D.R. Biography for Metro?," Variety, June 6, 1945, n.p.

The only successful production of the season for the Playwrights' Company was Elmer Rice's Dream Girl, starring Betty Field. The part was offered to two Hollywood stars who turned it down, according to a report in the Times, so the role fell to Miss Field.[12] It was the fourth play by Mr. Rice in which she was starred.

The season had been announced the preceding spring.[13] It was to have included a play each by Mr. Sherwood and Mr. Rice; the names of the plays were not given. Maxwell Anderson's Joan of Lorraine was also scheduled and another play by Elmer Rice entitled Tucker's People. Only two of these plays actually opened on Broadway during the 1945-46 season. Ingrid Bergman, who was to have played the part of Joan of Arc in the Anderson play, had Hollywood commitments and was unable to appear during the season. Tucker's People never opened, but the two un-named plays both reached Broadway as Dream Girl and Truckline Cafe.

Truckline Cafe stirred quite a discussion in New York when Mr. Anderson and the play's co-producers answered the critics in a series of newspaper ads. According to William Fields, the Company's press representative, the Playwrights'

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[12]Murray Schumach, "Report on the Rices," The New York Times, January 6, 1946, sec. II, p. 1.

[13]Sam Zolotow, "Playwrights' Prize Goes to Williams," The New York Times, June 6, 1945, p. 17.

Company had previously refused the script. When Harold Clurman and Elia Kazan, who produced the play, read and accepted the script, the Playwrights' Company lent its name, but did not back the show financially. At the time that it received such derogatory criticism, the Company took the stand that any good play which is worth producing is worth seeing and in this way upheld its part in the production of Truckline Cafe.[14] Mr. Anderson, however, had previously spoken against the power of the critics to "make or break a show" and wrote several strong statements against the critics in various newspaper ads saying they were "not qualified. . . either by their training or by their taste" and calling them the "Jukes Family of Journalism."[15] Despite the efforts of Mr. Anderson and the show's producers, Truckline Cafe was unable to continue and closed in March of 1946.

Another script which was considered for this season, Dunnigan's Daughter by S. N. Behrman, was released "in view of certain problems posed by the production."[16] Several weeks later Mr. Behrman, who disliked production management

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[14]Interview with William Fields, Press Agent for the Playwrights' Company, July 23, 1959.

[15]Daniel Blum, Theatre World, 1945-46 (New York: Chilton Company, 1946), p. 76.

[16]Sam Zolotow, "Behrman Resigns From Stage Unit," The New York Times, June 24, 1946, p. 27.

in a company in which each author was to manage his own shows, resigned because he "felt that he could not continue to spare the time from his writing necessary for production and managerial activities."[17] Dunnigan's Daughter was subsequently produced by the Theatre Guild. In all, Mr. Behrman had written only three plays for the Playwrights' Company, two of which were considered successes, while in the course of his playwrighting career he had written or helped write nine plays for the Guild. With the resignation of Mr. Behrman the Company had lost two of its original members.

The Sidney Howard award for the year 1946 was shared by Garson Kanin for his Born Yesterday and Arthur Laurents for Home of the Brave.

In the first three seasons after the Playwrights' Company was formed, it produced ten plays. Of these ten, only three were failures. In the next five years, the war years, the Company produced only nine plays, four of them failures. During one of these years the Company was not able to bring a single production to Broadway. The Company suffered from the war directly because war-time conditions are not favorable to theatre productions and indirectly because its members were so often involved in war efforts which kept them from actively

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[17] Ibid.

participating in Company leadership. During this period, the Company lost its second original member, S. N. Behrman. To begin the post-war seasons, the Playwrights' Company had an excellent record of hits behind it but was hampered by the loss of two playwright-members and five years of slack seasons.

The post-war season of 1946-47 opened for the Playwrights' Company with Maxwell Anderson's Joan of Lorraine which had been postponed from the previous season. Ingrid Bergman came from Hollywood to play the lead role, and both Miss Bergman and the play received excellent notices. Mantle notes that "reviewers who had chastised this dramatist brutally the season before now wrote glowingly of his dramatist's gifts as revealed anew with Joan."[18] The difficulties encountered with Truckline Cafe the preceding season seemed forgotten by Mr. Anderson and the critics alike.

The second production of the season was a musical version of Rice's Street Scene. It was during this time that part of the breach in the Company management left by the death of Howard and the resignation of Behrman was filled when Kurt Weill, who colaborated with Elmer Rice on this musical, joined the Playwrights' Company. Mr. Weill had previously worked with members of the company on various

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[18]Burns Mantle, The Best Plays of 1946-47 (New York: Dodd, Mead and Company, 1947), p. 9.

occasions and particularly with Maxwell Anderson on the successful Knickerbocker Holiday. His membership added a musician to the Company management.

Soon after the resignation of Mr. Behrman, it had been stated in The New York Times of June, 1946, that several authors were interested in his place in the Company.[19] The New York Post later reported that the Company hoped to get Garson Kanin and Ruth Gordon to join.[20] However, William Fields, the Company press agent, states that Miss Gordon was not asked to join the Company and that Mr. Kanin declined the offer. He also states that at this time several other prominent playwrights were asked to become members, but would not for reasons of their own.[21] Kurt Weill was the only addition at the time.

The addition of Mr. Weill to the management of the Playwrights' Company did not seem to solve their problem of getting more scripts. During the season of 1947-48 the company again had no productions to offer Broadway audiences. It was the second and last season that the Playwrights would have nothing to produce.

The last two seasons of the second period of the Com-

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[19]Sam Zolotow, "Behrman Resigns," loc. cit.

[20]"Composer Kurt Weill Joins Playwrights' Company," The New York Post, August 5, 1946, p.

[21]William Fields interview.

pany were seasons in which only one of the playwrights had scripts ready. During the 1948-49 season Maxwell Anderson's Anne of the Thousand Days and Garson Kanin's The Smile of the World were the only offerings by the Company. Lost in the Stars by Mr. Anderson and Mr. Weill was the sole production during the following season. Both of the Anderson plays were successes, running over 200 performances each. The Kanin play ran for only five performances. This was the second production by a non-member author and indicated the need for the playwrights to return to the active participation in their company. It also heralded the policies of the 50's.

During this time Elmer Rice was still busy with his fight against the censors, and Robert Sherwood was working on a book about Franklin Delano Roosevelt. Both men were doing writing in other fields. The Howard Awards for 1949 and 1950 were combined and given to the Dramatists' Guild to be used to develop opportunities for young playwrights.

Near the end of the 1949-50 season Kurt Weill, who had replaced S. N. Behrman on the board, died, reducing again the number of member playwrights to three. He had collaborated with Maxwell Anderson on two musicals, Knickerbocker Holiday and Lost in the Stars, and with Elmer Rice on Street Scene. For each of these Mr. Weill wrote the music. At the

time of his death, Mr. Weill had begun another play with Maxwell Anderson based on Huckleberry Finn. It was never completed.

The nine seasons between the beginning of World War Two and the beginning of the 1950's were eventful, but slack, years for the Playwrights' Company. The playwrights were active in the war effort and, at the same time, managed to produce a total of fourteen plays. Of these, nine were considered successful. There were two years in which nothing opened under the Playwrights' Company auspices. One member had resigned and a new one had been added. The new member had died, leaving the number of playwrights on the board at three. Only two productions had indicated the change of policy which characterizes the last decade in the Company's history, that of using scripts by non-member authors. The Company had survived the war, left memories behind it, and given a hint of its future.

CHAPTER IV

ROGER L. STEVENS

The season of 1950-51 began the third division in the history of the Playwrights' Company. The first three seasons comprised the first division, in which the group organized and produced their own plays, doing most of the work with a small group of directors and designers. The second period was one of slack seasons during the war and post-war years, when the Playwrights began to broaden the group of directors and designers with whom they worked and also began to accept non-member scripts for production. The third period is characterized by a change of policy regarding the use of non-member scripts which accompanied Mr. Roger L. Stevens' election to the board in 1951.

This new policy adopted by the Playwrights' Company in 1951 was the extensive production of scripts by non-member authors. It was ushered in with Sidney Kingsley's Darkness at Noon which opened at the Alvin Theatre on January 13 of that year. This show was followed in May by the official announcement of the policy change and Mr. Stevens' membership. The New York Times carried this statement:

> The Playwrights' Company which, on infrequent occasions in the past has been associated in the sponsorship of plays other than those of its members, is altering its policy. Henceforth it will welcome such arrangements where established people of the theatre

> seek co-sponsorship of scripts which the members feel merit production. The first indication of this trend came with the recent announcement that Roger Stevens, the wealthy Michigan realty man with a predilection for the serious theatre, had joined the group.[1]

Prior to this time the Playwrights' Company had only produced two plays by non-member authors, Sidney Kingsley's The Patriots and Garson Kanin's The Smile of the World. The following years would not see a single season pass without a play by a non-member.

It might be noted that this announcement speaks of "established people." At the Company's founding the members had included the encouragement of new authors as one of their purposes. At this point, therefore, the question arises as to how thoroughly this purpose had been carried out and whether this was also a change of policy. With the setting up of the Sidney Howard Award in 1940, the Playwrights attempted to carry out their plan. However, within their own business structure and the plays they produced, they had helped few new playwrights directly. It is to be concluded, therefore, that the use of scripts by established playwrights was not a trend in a new direction, but a business precaution taken to assure the quality of the plays which they produced and to increase the chances for successes. It should not be assumed, however, that the Playwrights' Company had limited itself to sure hits, and it must be remembered that the

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[1]Lewis Funke, "Gossip of the Rialto," The New York Times, May 27, 1941, Sec. II, p. 1.

addition of Kurt Weill to the Company and the production for Garson Kanin in 1943 had included men not established previously as leading dramatists. It should also be noted that the Company on several occasions had attempted to add to the number of playwrights on the Company board and had not been able to convince these playwrights to join. Thus, the announcement that the Company would use plays by established playwrights should not be considered a breach of policy by choice, but must be attributed to the needs which existed within the Company ranks.

The Company at this time was made up of three playwrights: Elmer Rice, Robert Sherwood, and Maxwell Anderson, and their legal advisor, John F. Wharton. According to Victor Shamrock, the general manager, the addition of Mr. Stevens was due to the fact that only three of these were providing material for production and,

> economic conditions being what they were it was becoming extremely difficult to continue the organization's setup and policies. Furthermore, it had been evident for some time that a pilot such as Mr. Stevens was needed for steering purposes.[2]

Mr. Stevens was to fulfill the hopes of the membership in later years, as is evidenced by the full seasons and many successes which followed his election.

Mr. Stevens' purpose in the Company was three-fold. He was to be production executive, to find scripts for the

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[2] Ibid.

Company to produce, and to raise money for production purposes.[3] He was well qualified for the position, as he was known as a wealthy financier with extensive capital and business associations, and he had been associated closely with the production of plays for many years. Mr. Stevens was a member of the production company, Producers Theatre, with Robert Whitehead and the realtor Robert W. Dowling. He was also associated with the Playwrights-Six Play Company, a syndicate of theatrical "angels," or backers.[4] At the time he joined the Playwrights' Company, Mr. Stevens was a director of the American National Theatre Academy. Such experience and associations made him a good candidate for the "pilot" which Mr. Shamrock said that the Company needed.

Mr. Roger Stevens expressed interests in common with Playwrights' Company policies. Soon after joining the Company, he said,

> I am willing to invest in any good play that appeals to me. But it must be a straight play. I am not interested in musicals. I became a member of the Board of the Playwrights' Company because I think that organization represents the best hope for drama.[5]

This statement closely parallels the attitudes of the Playwrights in the formation period of the Company. Each of the

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[3]Sam Zolotow, "Playwrights' Unit Spurs Expansion," The New York Times, April 27, 1951, p. 20.

[4]Richard Carter, "Thriving Producer With An Angle," Life, December 9, 1957, pp. 83-84.

[5]The New York Daily Mirror, January 6, 1951.

original five members was known for his dramatic scripts and none had written any successful musicals. Furthermore, in the entire thirteen seasons of its existence the Company had produced only two musicals, Street Scene and Knickerbocker Holiday, both with Kurt Weill.

With the announcement of Mr. Stevens' membership on the Board and the beginning of the last decade of the Company's production to the present date, the Playwrights' Company extended the trend noticed in the post-war years of broadening their associations with additional directors and designers with whom they had not worked before. Joe Mielziner and Howard Bay, who designed for the Playwrights so frequently in the first decade, appeared occasionally, and Boris Aronson and Donald Oenslager returned to design sets for the Company during the '50's. However, many new names were added. Frederick Fox, who designed the set for Darkness at Noon in 1950, was one of the first of these. Oliver Smith, Cecil Beaton, Motley, Syrjala, John Root, Lester Palakox, Peter Larkin, Ben Edwards, Charles Elson, and Zvi Geyra were other designers who worked with the Playwrights between 1950 and 1959. Anne Fraser and Loudon Sainthill were English designers whose sets were brought to Broadway by the Playwrights' Company.

During this decade, Elmer Rice continued to direct all of his own plays. However, with the addition of scripts

by non-members, other directors began working with Company productions more frequently. Sidney Kingsley directed his own Darkness at Noon in 1950, and Noel Coward directed his Nude with Violin and Present Laughter in 1958. Other notable directors who worked on Playwrights' Company production in this last period were Jose Ferrer, Elia Kazan, Jose Quintero, and Cyril Ritchard.

The decade of the '50's began well for the Playwrights' Company. Darkness at Noon was successful and ran for 185 performances. It starred Herbert Rattner, Claude Rains, and Kim Hunter.

The second show of the 1950-51 season was a disappointment. The Company opened Elmer Rice's Not for Children at the Coronet Theatre in February of 1951. It ran for only seven performances.

Only one success and one failure were far from the season as it had been announced by the Company in the spring of 1950. In addition to Rice's Not for Children, Robert Sherwood was working on a play, and Maxwell Anderson was to have prepared with Kurt Weill a musical based on Mark Twain's Huckleberry Finn, plus a drama called Love Among the Ruins.[6] By fall of that year the plans were extended to include the drama by Sidney Kingsley. Of all these, only Not for Children

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[6]Show Biz, "Playwrights' Company Plans Fall Schedule," April 17, 1950, n. p.

and Darkness at Noon made Broadway during that season. The musical by Anderson and Weill was halted by the latter's death, and although later announcements included plans to finish the work, it never opened in New York.

By the fall of 1951 the Playwrights' Company, now with the full assistance of Roger Stevens, announced a season which Robert Coleman of the New York Daily Mirror said was more ambitious than any since their beginning in 1938. For the 1951-52 season the Company again proposed to produce Maxwell Anderson's play, now named Barefoot in Athens. Also planned was Robert Sherwood's The Seventh Floor, which had been announced for the previous season as Girl with Dogs. The play was never produced in New York, and Sherwood was unable to prepare another script until 1956. Elmer Rice planned to have a play called The Grand Tour, and the Company also announced plans to produce Edward Caulfield's The Idea.

The season of 1951-52 as it actually appeared for the Playwrights' Company consisted of three productions. The first to open was The Fourposter by Jan de Hartog, which had not been included in the plans announced in the spring. However, it followed the change of policy begun with Mr. Stevens' addition to the Company, for it was written by an author who was not a member of the organization. The play was a success and ran for several seasons, followed by very

successful road tours.

As was true of the previous season, only this first show, The Fourposter, was a success. Anderson's Barefoot in Athens opened in October of 1951, and Rice's The Grand Tour followed in December. Both plays had short runs and were financial failures.

1952-53 was another bad season for the Playwrights' Company. With only two hits in the two previous seasons, the Company needed to improve its record. However, only two productions reached New York stages, both by non-member authors. Mr. Pickwick by Stanley Young opened in September, early in the season, and closed after eight performances. It was followed by a second failure, The Emperor's Clothes by George Tabori, co-produced by Robert Whitehead, which ran for only sixteen performances. At this point, the addition of Mr. Stevens to the board apparently had not accomplished what the Company had hoped.

In 1953, however, the desired improvement began to materialize. The 1953-54 season contained five plays produced under Playwrights' Company auspices. Of these, In the Summer House, by Jan Bowles, and The Winner, by Elmer Rice, ran only sixteen performances each. However, the first hit, which opened in September of 1953, was Tea and Sympathy, by Robert Anderson, and it played for a total of 720 performances, including its road tour. The other successes were

Sabrina Fair, by Samuel Taylor, and a translation of Ondine, by Jean Giraudoux, which ran for 317 and 164 performances, respectively. For the Company the 1953-54 season was one which Robert Coleman of the Daily Mirror called a "terrific batting average in any league."[7]

The season, the Company's fifteenth, also saw another important event. With the production of his play, Tea and Sympathy, Robert Anderson was elected to membership on the board. He was the second playwright to be added. This made the ratio of producing members to non-producing members four to two. Mr. Anderson was thirty-four when he joined the company and added what Theatre Arts Magazine referred to as "their first injection of that needed ingredient, young blood."[8]

During the season Robert Sherwood made arrangements to write a series of scripts for NBC television. However, only one show was even put on the air. Meanwhile, Maxwell Anderson's name was in the news for his winning of the National Institute of Arts and Letters' gold medal for distinguished achievement in drama. After 15 years on Fifth Avenue the Company moved its offices to the Gayety Theatre Building to share offices with the Producers' Theatre,

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[7]Robert Coleman, "Broadway This Season Has Done All Right," The New York Daily Mirror, June 20, 1954, n. p.

[8]Theatre Arts Magazine, "Offstage," November 1953, p. 14.

another group with which Robert Stevens was associated. With all of these events and successes and the addition of Robert Anderson, the fifteenth season, 1953-54, was an important one for the Playwrights' Company.

In the fall of 1954 the Company returned to Broadway with continued vigor. The schedule included a list of five plays, two of which were outstanding successes. All Summer Long was the first production to open, and it closed after only sixty performances. This Robert Anderson drama apparently lacked something which his Tea and Sympathy had, and Louis Kronenberger who edited The Best Plays of 1954-55 felt it fell infinitely shorter of effect.[9] The show's successor, The Traveling Lady by Jane Bowles, was able to run for only half the number of performances. Then came two hits in a row. On December 8, 1954, Maxwell Anderson's The Bad Seed was presented for the scrutiny of New York audiences. It played for 317 performances and was later made into a film. Cat On a Hot Tin Roof, written by Tennessee Williams and directed by Elia Kazan, opened in March of 1955 and became the second hit of the season. It, too, played well in New York and was later made into a successful film. Then in May, Barunch Lumet's Once Upon a Taylor opened and closed. The play had been found by Mr. Stevens and George Baroff, but was only able to hold its head above water for eight per-

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[9]Louis Kronenberger, The Best Plays of 1954-55, (New York: Dodd, Mead and Company, 1955), p. 10.

formances. Two hits in five productions was not the season its predecessor had been, but for a producing company it was considered good.

For the next season the Company produced three plays. One, Tiger at the Gates, translated from the French of Jean Giraudoux by Christopher Fry, was well received. The second opening of the season played for 150 performances, but financially The Ponder Heart was unable to achieve success. The last play to open in 1955-56, Leslie Steven's The Lovers, lasted for only four performances.

In 1956-57 the Playwrights' Company had a season reminiscent of the war years. Only one play was produced by the group piloted now by Mr. Stevens. Small War on Murray Hill was not well accepted. However, it was important for it was the last play by Robert E. Sherwood which the Company produced. Mr. Sherwood died on November 14, 1955. The loss of Robert Sherwood was a severe blow to the Playwrights' Company and to the world of drama. The 1956-57 season itself would indicate how strongly the Company felt his passing. After increasing the number of creative board members from three to four with the addition of Robert Anderson in 1953, Mr. Sherwood's death brought the number back down.

His loss to the nation and to dramatic art is evidenced by an issue of Chapter One, a publication of the Greater New York Chapter of the American National Theatre

and Academy. The entire issue for December 1955 was devoted to covering the ceremonial tribute to Mr. Sherwood given by ANTA, the Council of the Living Theatre, the Playwrights' Company, and the Theatre Guild.[10] Each organization owed a great deal to this playwright and in this manner expressed the loss it felt. Sherwood's Small War on Murray Hill, opened after his death. Its failure was a poor tribute to a great playwright.

By the fall of 1957 the Playwrights' Company had recovered from the slim preceeding season and began a full schedule with Jean Anouilh's very successful Time Remembered. Much of the play's acclaim should be attributed to its star, Helen Hays. She was assisted by the much-praised young actress, Susan Strasburg, who was able to further her acting career by this excellent presentation. The play ran for over 200 performances and was scheduled to be made into a film in England.

The successful opener was followed by five plays which were not considered hits although two were financially successful. Nude With Violin, by Noel Coward, and The Rope Dancers, by Norton Wichengrad, made money for the Company, but the revival of Wycherly's The Country Wife, Ray Lawler's Summer of the 17th Doll, and Noel Coward's Present Laughter

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[10] Chapter One, (New York: The Greater New York Chapter of ANTA), Vol. 2, No. 9, December 1955.

were unable to operate at a profit. However, the season was the most ambitious ever attempted by the Company, and financially a ratio of three successes to three failures is considered good.

The twentieth season for the Playwrights' Company, 1958-59, was even more ambitious than its predecessor and was one of the most eventful. The season was composed of a total of eight productions of which two were successful. It was near the close of this season, on February 28, that Maxwell Anderson died and soon after, in April, that Elmer Rice announced his resignation from the Company.

The season included the two hits, The Pleasure of His Company, by Samuel Taylor and Cornelia Otis Skinner, and The Gazebo, by Alec Coppel. Howie, A Handfull of Fire, Edwin Booth, Cue for Passion, Look After Lulu, and a musical version of Sean O'Casey's Juno, completed the twentieth year of production for this important company.

The 1958-59 season closed the 20-year era for the Playwrights' Company. Sidney Howard's death in 1939 was followed by S. N. Behrman's resignation. Then with the deaths of Robert Sherwood and Maxwell Anderson and the resignation of Elmer Rice, all of the original five playwrights who had formed the Company were gone. The board members who remained were John F. Wharton, the legal counsel; Robert Anderson, the playwright; and Roger L. Stevens, the "pilot."

The final period, considered in this thesis, which began with Mr. Steven's election to the board in 1951 and the announcement of the Company's acceptance of scripts by non-member authors, had ended. In the last two seasons the Company had produced fourteen plays, all with co-producers. Until this time the Company had produced only twelve plays with co-producers over its eighteen years.

This third period saw the broadening of the Company's policies to include outside authors' scripts and the extensive use of co-producers with a resultant increase in the number of plays presented each season. It was a period in which the Company furnished more plays for New York audiences than in the entire twelve years preceding it. Of the thirty-five plays, nine were outstanding successes and two others were financially successful. The third period was one of the most successful in the Company's history, but it was the completion of two decades in which the Company, as it was originally formed, passed from sight. With the closing of the 1958-59 season the Playwrights' Company had weathered twenty years, had changed its managerial organization and policies, and now faced its future in a new form.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

In a period of twenty years beginning in the Fall of 1938 the Playwrights' Company established itself in the annals of American theatre. In order to ascertain properly just how important this Company has been and just how deep has been its mark in our theatre, some assessment of its contribution is included in this study. This assessment can be made neither by a comparison with other producers during the same period of time nor solely by a comparison of the number of hits and successes which this Company has had with the hits of other producers, for no other producer in the American Theatre has ever been set up in the same form nor with the same problems as this Company.

Therefore, the Playwrights' Company must be evaluated in terms of its goals and how well it was able to achieve those goals in its twenty years. It must also be measured in terms of its individual contribution to the advancement of the theatrical art and to those who practice it.

It should be stated that it is too soon at this point to make a complete analysis of the importance of the Playwrights' Company. Only time and the future developments in New York and all over America will be able to give scholars the breadth of vision and understanding which will be

necessary to state definitely just how much this producing Company has given our national theatre. However, at this time, we are able to gain from the record some impression of the mark which the five who originated the Playwrights' Company have made during the twenty years in which some of them have remained on the governing board of the organization.

In the world of play production, the number of plays which are considered successful, or which are termed hits, indicates to some extent how well the producer has been able to furnish enjoyable theatre for his audiences. Since one of the purposes stated by the five playwrights who formed this Company in 1938 was to produce good theatre for the American people, its record of productions and successes proves that the Company went a long way in accomplishing this aim. The large number of hits and the total number of plays produced by the Company, despite the turmoil within the nation during the 1940's and the gradual decrease in the Company's producing board members, speaks for itself.

In a period of twenty seasons the Company produced or co-produced a total of fifty-eight plays. The revival of Present Laughter alternated with Nude With Violin and therefore is not considered a separate production. Of that number twenty-nine are classed as successes by the Company. To be a success a play must run for a sufficient number of performances to pay its own expenses and then show

a profit. This is the usual method of determining a success. However, a play can also attain success status through the sale of movie rights or because of post-Broadway tours which make up Broadway losses to the producer. Several productions of the Playwrights' Company became successes in this manner. Key Largo and Candle in the Wind were able to make up losses through their road tours while other plays such as Knickerbocker Holiday and Time Remembered were classed successes because of the sale of film rights.

The quality of the plays produced by the Playwrights' Company is shown by the number of plays which have received various prizes and awards both in this country and abroad. Of the fifty-eight plays produced, three received Pulitzer prizes; five received the Drama Critics' Annual Awards; and one, The Fourposter, received the Antionette Perry Award for 1951. Three other plays were nominated for the Drama Critics' Award. Only one of these received two awards, Cat on a Hot Tin Roof, which received both the Pulitzer Prize and the Drama Critics' Award. Numerous others have been choices for the Best Plays series, a publication which summarizes the best plays of each season.[1]

Another indication of the skill and care with which this Company has dealt with its plays is the limited number of plays that closed "out of town." Plays are usually pre-

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[1]See Appendix I.

pared and first opened in a city near New York in which there is a chance to try them out on audiences. If a play is not accepted in its trial runs, it may be reworked and improved before being opened on Broadway. However, plays which are not accepted even after reworking are not opened in New York and are almost a complete loss to the producer. Such plays are said to have closed "out of town."

Prior to 1955 only one show was closed "out of town" by the Company. This was Sidney Howard's Madam, Will You Walk which was opened in Baltimore in November of 1939 and closed after two weeks of performance. During the time that the playwrights themselves headed the board they were so careful with the scripts they accepted for production that they felt there was no need to close other plays before they reached New York.

The other four shows which were closed before they reached New York all came after 1955 during the larger seasons which Mr. Stevens piloted. The first was A Quiet Place, by Julian Claman, in 1955. It was followed by three more "out of town" closings: Build With One Hand, by Joseph Kramm, in 1956; The Saturday Night Kid, by Jack Dunphy, in 1957; and Listen To The Mocking Bird, by Edward Chodorov, in 1958. Five "out of town" closings in twenty years is an excellent record.

A second purpose expressed by the playwrights was

that of helping younger playwrights. The lack of young playwrights was a major concern to the men who formed the Company and the five felt that their experience and knowledge would enable them to contribute something to new writers in the field.

With the establishment of the Sidney Howard Award the Playwrights' Company made a major effort toward helping younger men. The addition of Robert Anderson to the Company was a contribution to this new writer's chances for success. However, prior to the establishment of their new policy in 1951, the Company did little else which made a direct contribution to younger writers. In this respect the Company did not fulfill its hopes as well as it might have.

It should be mentioned to the Company's credit, however, that many young actors and actresses were able to further their careers in Playwrights' Company productions. Recent successes have aided Patty McCormack and Susan Strasburg. Marlon Brando played in Truckline Cafe before he reached Hollywood fame. With Katharine Cornell in No Time For Comedy was the now well-known actor, Sir Laurence Olivier. There Shall Be No Night gave a boost to the career of Montgomery Clift in 1940, while Richard Whorf, now a prominent director and actor, played in the same company. Wendell Corey and Richard Widmark both found Elmer Rice's Dream Girl a springboard to Hollywood. Keenan

Wynn played in Howard's Madam, Will You Walk. Throughout its history the Playwrights' Company has been interested in new talent, and the list of players who have been helped by the Company is long.[2]

The playwrights have also worked with some of the top designers and directors in the American Theatre. Elmer Rice was the most frequent director for the Company and handled a total of twelve plays. Garson Kanin and Harold Clurman worked for the Company with three plays each. Jo Mielziner was the designer who appeared on Company programs most often. He designed the sets for eighteen productions for the Company, while Howard Bay designed five and Oliver Smith four.[3]

The Playwrights' Company for twenty years has been one of the leading producing companies in New York. It has furnished good theatre for many Americans and has used excellent scripts and some of the best designers, directors, and players in this country. It has helped to develop the careers of numerous young actors and has made some effort to help new playwrights. Most important, it proved that a group of five of America's leading playwrights could work together in harmony and produce good and successful theatre. Of all of its aims, this latter is the most important, for it was the primary purpose of the five to provide a producing organization for which each could produce his own scripts

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[2]See Appendix III. [3]See Appendix II.

in the manner he felt they should be handled. It gave each author the assurance that he would no longer need to peddle his scripts from producer to producer and then be only a minor member of the company which completed the creation he had so carefully begun. The five playwrights set out to form themselves a producing "home," as Maxwell Anderson put it, and they did. This new experiment in American production indicated that it could be done and that it could be successful. This is the major importance and contribution of the Playwrights' Company.

In The New York Times of March 11, 1960, soon after the resignation of Elmer Rice from the Board of Directors of the Playwrights' Company, the statement was made that "Plans to liquidate were made known last August."[4] This statement appeared to be the end of the producing company whose beginning had caused so much controversy. However, in a letter dated April 13, 1960, Mr. William Fields, the press agent, said, "Events during the next few months will speak for themselves--and it is my prediction that a number of plays will continue to be produced."[5] A great Company in the American Theatre has proved its worth by accomplishing its primary aim--to produce good theatre for the American

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[4]Sam Zolotow, The New York Times, March 11, 1960.

[5]Letter to the author from William Fields, April 13, 1960.

theatre-going public and to provide a "home" for five playwrights. The Company completed twenty years in 1959 with the resignation of Elmer Rice and left a promise for the future with Mr. Roger Stevens and a new board.

APPENDIX I

Fold out →

Playwrights' Company Productions

APPENDIX II

DIRECTORS AND DESIGNERS

OF

PLAYWRIGHTS' COMPANY'S SHOWS AND CO-PRODUCTIONS*

I. Directors of shows produced by the Playwrights' Company:

Director	No. of Shows	Shows
Elmer Rice	11	Abe Lincoln in Illinois American Landscape Two on an Island Journey to Jerusalem The Talley Method Flight to the West A New Life Dream Girl Not For Children The Grand Tour The Winner
Garson Kanin	3	The Rugged Path The Smile of the World Small War on Murray Hill
Elia Kazan	2	Tea and Sympathy Cat on a Hot Tin Roof
Alan Anderson	1	Barefoot in Athens
John Burrell	1	Mr. Pickwick
Reginald Denham	1	Bad Seed
Vincent J. Donehue	1	The Traveling Lady
Robert Douglas	1	The Ponder Heart
Jose Ferrer	1	The Fourposter
Charles Friedman	1	Street Scene
Michael Gordon	1	Storm Operation

*William Fields, Twenty Years 1938-58, Issued William Fields office, 1959.

Directors and designers - cont.

Director	No. of Shows	Shows
Margo Jones and Sam Wanamaker	1	Joan of Lorraine
Sidney Kingsley	1	Darkness at Noon
Joseph Kramm and Warren Enters	1	Build With One Hand
Joshua Logan	1	Knickerbocker Holiday
Alfred Lunt	1	Ondine
Rouben Mamoulian	1	Lost in the Stars
Delbert Mann	1	A Quiet Place
Albert Marre	1	Time Remembered
Guthrie McClintic	1	Key Largo
H. C. Potter	1	Sabrina Fair
Alan Schneider	1	All Summer Long
Lem Ward	1	The Eve of St. Mark
Margaret Webster	1	Madam, Will You Walk

2. Directors of shows produced by the Playwrights' Company in cooperation with other producers:

Director	No. of Shows	Shows	Co-Producer
Harold Clurman	3	Truckline Cafe	Harold Clurman & Elia Kazan
		The Emperor's Clothes	Robert Whitehead
		Tiger at the Gates	Henry W. Margo
Jose Ferrer	2	Edwin Booth	Jose Ferrer
		Juno	Oliver Smith & Oliver Rea
Alfred Lunt	2	There Shall Be No Night	Theatre Guild
		Candle in the Wind	Theatre Guild

Directors and designers - cont.

Director	No. of Shows	Shows	Co-producer
Cyril Ritchard	2	The Pleasure of His Company	Fredrich Brisson
		Look After Lulu	Gilbert Miller, Lance Hamilton & Charles Russell
Joseph Anthony	1	Once Upon a Tailor	George Boroff
Edward Chodorov	1	Listen to the Mocking Bird	Sal Gottlieb
Jerome Chodorov	1	The Gazebo	Fredrich Brisson
Noel Coward	1	Nude With Violin	Laurence Hamilton & Charles Russell
		Present Laughter	James M. Slevin & John Gerstad
George Devine	1	The Country Wife	Malcolm Wells & Daniel Blum
Michael Gordon	1	The Lovers	Gayle Stine
John Gerstad	1	Howie	James M. Slevin & John Gerstad
Peter Hall	1	The Rope Dancers	Gilbert Miller
George Keathley	1	The Saturday Night Kid	Oliver Smith
Robert Lewis	1	A Handful of Fire	David Susskind
Guthrie McClintic	1	No Time For Comedy	Kathrine Cornell
H. C. Porter	1	Anne of the Thousand Days	Leland Hayward
Jose Quintero	1	In the Summer House	Oliver Smith
Elmer Rice	1	Cue for Passion	Franchot Productions

Directors and designers - cont.

Director	No. of Shows	Shows	Co-producer
John Sumner	1	Summer of the 17th Doll	Theatre Guild Elizabethan Theatre trust St. James Place, Ltd.
Shepard Traube	1	The Patriots	Rowland Stebbins
John C. Wilson	1	The Pirate	Theatre Guild

3. Designers of shows produced by the Playwrights' Company:

Designer	No. of Shows	Shows
Jo Mielziner	13	Abe Lincoln in Illinois Knickerbocker Holiday Key Largo Two on an Island Journey to Jerusalem Flight to the West The Tally Method The Rugged Path Dream Girl Street Scene Tea and Sympathy All Summer Long Cat On A Hot Tin Roof
Howard Bay	5	The Eve of St. Mark A New Life Storm Operation The Grand Tour Build With One Hand
Donald Oenslager	3	The Smile Of The World Sabrina Fair A Quiet Place
Boris Aronson	2	Barefoot In Athens Small War on Murray Hill
Ben Edwards	2	The Traveling Lady The Ponder Heart

Directors and designers - cont.

Designer	No. of Shows	Shows
George Jenkins	2	Lost In The Stars Bad Seed
Kathleen Ankers	1	Mr. Pickwick
Aline Bernstein	1	American Landscape
Frederick Fox	1	Darkness At Noon
Robert Edmond Jones	1	Madam, Will You Walk
Pater Larkin	1	Ondine
Lester Polakov	1	The Winner
John Root	1	Not For Children
Lee Simonson	1	Joan Of Lorraine
Oliver Smith	1	Time Remembered
S. Syrjala	1	The Fourposter

4. Designers of shows produced by the Playwrights' Company in cooperation with other producers:

Designer	No. of Shows	Shows	Co-producer
Jo Mielziner	5	No Time For Comedy	Kathrine Cornell
		Candle in the Wind	Theatre Guild
		Anne of the Thousand Days	Leland Hayward
		A Handful of Fire	David Susskind
		The Gazebo	Fredrich Brisson
Oliver Smith	4	In The Summer House	Oliver Smith
		The Saturday Night Kid	Oliver Smith
		Nude With Violin (altered to fit Present Laughter)	Laurence Hamilton & Charles Russell James M. Slevin & John Gerstad
		Juno	Oliver Smith & Oliver Rea

Directors and designers - cont.

Designer	No. of Shows	Shows	Co-producer
Boris Aronson	3	Truckline Cafe	Harold Clurman & Elia Kazan
		Once Upon A Tailor	George Boroff
		The Rope Dancers	Gilbert Miller
Lemuel Ayres	1	The Pirate	Theatre Guild
Cecil Beaton	1	Look After Lulu	Gilbert Miller, Lance Hamilton & Charles Russell
Howard Bay	1	The Patriots	Rowland Stebbins
Charles Elson	1	The Lovers	Gayle Stine
Anne Fraser	1	Summer Of The 17th Doll	Theatre Guild Elizabethan Theatre trust St. James Place, Ltd.
Frederick Fox	1	Howie	James M. Slevin & John Gerstad
Zvi Geyra	1	Edwin Booth	Jose Ferrer
George Jenkins	1	Cue For Passion	Franchot Productions
Leo Kerz	1	Listen to the Mocking Bird	Sal Gottlieb
Motley	1	The Country Wife	Malcolm Wells & Daniel Blum
Donald Oenslager	1	The Pleasure Of His Company	Fredrich Brisson
Lester Polakov	1	The Emperor's Clothes	Robert Whitehead
Loudon Sainthill	1	Tiger At The Gates	Henry W. Margo
Richard Whorf	1	There Shall Be No Night	Theatre Guild

APPENDIX III

ACTORS AND ACTRESSES

WHO HAVE BEEN SEEN IN PLAYWRIGHTS' COMPANY SHOWS*

Actress	Show
Judith Anderson	In The Summer House
Barbara Bel Geddes	Cat On A Hot Tin Roof
Ingrid Bergman	Joan of Lorraine
Shirley Booth	Juno
Pamela Brown	The Country Wife
Billie Burke	Listen To The Mocking Bird
Ina Claire	The Talley Method
Katharine Cornell	No Time For Comedy
Betty Field	Two On An Island Flight To The West A New Life Dream Girl Not For Children The Fourposter
Geraldine Fitzgerald	Build With One Hand
Joan Fontaine	Tea And Sympathy
Lynn Fontanne	The Pirate There Shall Be No Night
Tammy Grimes	Look After Lulu
Ruth Gordon	The Smile Of The World
Julie Harris	The Country Wife
Helen Hays	Candle In The Wind Time Remembered
Audrey Hepburn	Ondine

*William Fields, Twenty Years 1938-58, News release issued William Fields office, 1959, unpublished.

Nancy Kelly	Bad Seed
Deborah Kerr	Tea and Sympathy
Eva Le Gallienne	Listen To The Mocking Bird
Siobhan McKenna	The Rope Dancers
Jayne Meadows	The Gazebo
Joyce Redman	Anne Of The Thousand Days
Sylvia Sidney	The Fourposter
Cornelia Otis Skinner	The Pleasure Of His Company
Jan Sterling	Small War On Murray Hill
Susan Strasberg	Time Remembered
Margaret Sullavan	Sabrina Fair
Jessica Tandy	The Fourposter
Shelley Winters	The Saturday Night Kid
Diana Wynyard	Cue For Passion

Actor	Show
Walter Abel	The Pleasure Of His Company
George Baker	Look After Lulu
Leslie Banks	Lost In The Stars
Richard Burton	Time Remembered
Art Carney	The Rope Dancers
George M. Cohan	Madam, Will You Walk
Joseph Cotten	Sabrina Fair
Noel Coward	Nude With Violin Present Laughter
Hume Cronyn	The Fourposter

James Daly	A Handful Of Fire
Melvyn Douglas	Juno
Todd Duncan	Lost In The Stars
Jose Ferrer	Edwin Booth
Mel Ferrer	Ondine
Leo Genn	Small War On Murray Hill
Rex Harrison	Anne Of The Thousand Days
Laurence Harvey	The Country Wife
Walter Huston	Knickerbocker Holiday
Burl Ives	Cat On A Hot Tin Roof
Barry Jones	Barefoot In Athens
John Kerr	Cue For Passion
Alfred Lunt	The Pirate There Shall Be No Night
Roddy McDowall	Look After Lulu
Raymond Massey	Abe Lincoln In Illinois
Burgess Meredith	The Fourposter
Philip Merivale	The Talley Method
Paul Muni	Key Largo
Alex Nicol	The Saturday Night Kid
Elliott Nugent	Not For Children Build With One Hand
Laurence Oliver	No Time For Comedy
Tyrone Power	A Quiet Place
Claude Rains	Darkness At Noon
Michael Redgrave	Tiger At The Gates

Cyril Ritchard	The Pleasure Of His Company
Charlie Ruggles	The Pleasure Of His Company
Walter Slezak	The Gazebo
Spencer Tracy	The Rugged Path
David Wayne	The Ponder Heart

MEMBERS OF SUPPORTING CASTS WHOSE CAREERS SUBSEQUENTLY ON STAGE, SCREEN, RADIO, TELEVISION, OR OPERA HAVE BEEN FURTHERED BY THE EXPERIENCE AND RECOGNITION GAINED FROM THEIR APPEARANCE IN PLAYS PRODUCED BY THE PLAYWRIGHTS' COMPANY

Actress	Show
Sara Allgood	Madam, Will You Walk
Monte Amundsen	Juno
Carroll Baker	All Summer Long
Joan Blondell	The Rope Dancers
Diane Cilento	Tiger At The Gates
Peggy Conklin	Howie Madam Will You Walk
Joan Copland	A Handful Of Fire
Leora Dana	Sabrina Fair A Quiet Place
Mildred Dunnock	Cat On A Hot Tin Roof Madam Will You Walk
Madge Evans	The Patriots
Arlene Frances	Journey to Jerusalem
Eva Gabor	Present Laughter
Luella Gear	Sabrina Fair

Virginia Gilmore	Truckline Cafe
Uta Hagen	Key Largo
Juanite Hall	The Pirate
Dolores Hart	The Pleasure Of His Company
Eileen Heckart	Bad Seed
Barbara Jefford	Tiger At The Gates
Anne Jeffreys	Street Scene
Susan Kohner	A Quiet Place
Lotte Lenya	Barefoot In Athens
Beverly Lunsford	The Rope Dancers
Patty McCormick	Bad Seed
Leueen McGrath	Tiger At The Gates
Sarah Marshal	Mr. Pickwick The Ponder Heart
Kay Medford	A Handful of Fire
Una Merkel	The Ponder Heart Listen To The Mocking Bird
Cathleen Nesbitt	Sabrina Fair
Anne Revere	Cue For Passion
Polly Rowles	Look After Lulu
Madeleine Sherwood	Cat On A Hot Tin Roof
Louis Smith	Edwin Booth
Kim Stanley	The Traveling Lady
Laureen Stapleton	The Emperor's Clothes
Jan Sterling	The Rugged Path
Majorie Steele	Cat On A Hot Tin Roof

Polyna Stoska	Street Scene
Beatrice Straight	The Grand Tour
Joan Tetzel	The Winner
Phyllis Thaxter	There Shall Be No Night
Evelyn Varden	Dream Girl Bad Seed
June Walker	All Summer Long
Joanne Woodward	The Lovers
Estelle Winwood	Mr. Pickwick

Actor	Show
Luther Adler	Two On An Island
Leon Ames	Howie
Edward Andrews	The Gazebo
Tod Andrews	Sabrina Fair
Ed Begley	All Summer Long
Theodore Bikel	The Rope Dancers
Marlon Brando	Truckline Cafe
Romney Brent	Joan of Lorraine The Fourposter
Montgomery Clift	There Shall Be No Night
Lee J. Cobb	Key Largo
Donald Cook	American Landscape
Wendell Corey	Dream Girl
John Cromwell	Sabrina Fair
John Dall	The Eve of St. Mark
Howard DaSilva	Abe Lincoln In Illinois

Richard Derr	The Grand Tour
Don Dubbins	Tea and Sympathy tour
Robert Duke	Anne of the Thousand Days Sabrina Fair
Leif Erickson	Tea and Sympathy
Jose Ferrer	Key Largo
Robert Fleming	No Time For Comedy
Russell Gaige	Cue For Passion
Ben Gazzara	Cat On A Hot Tin Roof
Jack Gilford	Look After Lulu
Lorne Greene	Edwin Booth
Sidney Greenstreet	There Shall Be No Night
Thomas Gomez	Cat On A Hot Tin Roof There Shall Be No Night
Lloyd Gough	Cue For Passion Ondine Bad Seed
Hurd Hatfield	The Lovers
Tom Helmore	The Winner No Time For Comedy
Paul Henreid	Flight To The West
Steve Hill	The Smile Of The World
Pat Hingle	Cat On A Hot Tin Roof
John Ireland	A New Life
Barry Jones	Barefoot In Athens
Oscar Karlweis	Once Upon A Tailor
Kurt Kaszner	Look After Lulu
Arthur Kennedy	Madam, Will You Walk

Ian Keith	The Rugged Path
John Kerr	Tea and Sympathy All Summer Long
Richard Killmar	Knickerbocker Holiday
Joseph Kramm	Journey to Jerusalem
Otto Kruger	The Smile Of The World
Robert Lansing	Cue For Passion The Lovers
Jack Lord	The Traveling Lady Cat On A Hot Tin Roof
Sidney Lumet	Journey to Jerusalem
Jack MacGowran	Juno
Darren McGavin	The Lovers
Biff McGuire	Listen To The Mocking Bird
Keven McCarthy	Abe Lincoln In Illinois
Myron McCormick	Storm Operation
Scott McKay	The Eve Of St. Mark Sabrina Fair
Karl Malden	Flight To The West
Hugh Marlowe	Flight To The West Journey to Jerusalem Key Largo
Daniel Massey	Small War On Murray Hill
George Mathews	The Eve of St. Mark Barefoot In Athens
Walter Matthau	Anne of the Thousand Days
Ray Middleton	Knickerbocker Holiday
Arnold Moss	Journey to Jerusalem Flight to the West
Alen Nicol	Cat On A Hot Tin Roof

Jack Palance	Darkness At Noon
Anthony Perkins	Tea and Sympathy
George Peppard	The Pleasure Of His Company
Robert Porterfield	Abe Lincoln in Illinois
William Prince	The Eve Of St. Mark
Cliff Robertson	Cat On A Hot Tin Roof
Charles Robinson	The Pleasure Of His Company
Robert Rounseville	Knickerbocker Holiday
Albert Salmi	Howie
Hiram Sherman	The Talley Method
Brian Sullivan	Street Scene
Clinton Sundberg	The Rugged Path
Sam Wanamaker	Joan of Lorraine
Richard Waring	Edwin Booth
Richard Whorf	There Shall Be No Night
Richard Widmark	Dream Girl tour
Brandon de Wilde	The Emperor's Clothes
John Williams	No Time For Comedy Anne Of The Thousand Days
Joseph Wiseman	Joan Of Lorraine Journey to Jerusalem The Saturday Night Kid
Keenan Wynn	Madam, Will You Walk

APPENDIX IV

CO-PRODUCERS OF PLAYWRIGHTS' COMPANY SHOWS

Co-producer	No. of Shows	Shows
George Boroff	1	Once Upon a Tailor
Fredrich Brisson	2	The Gazebo The Pleasure of His Company
Daniel Blum With Malcolm Wells	1	The Country Wife
Harold Clurman With Elia Kazan	1	Truckline Cafe
Kathrine Cornell	1	No Time For Comedy
Jose Ferrer	1	Edwin Booth
Franchot Productions	1	Cue for Passion
John Gerstad With James M. Slevin	2	Howie Present Laughter
Sal Gottlieb	1	Listen to the Mocking Bird
Leland Hayward	1	Anne of the Thousand Days
Lance Hamilton With Gilbert Miller & Charles Russell	1	Look After Lulu
Laurence Hamilton With Charles Russell	1	Nude With Violin
Elia Kazan With Harold Clurman	1	Truckline Cafe
Henry W. Margolis	1	Tiger at the Gates
Gilbert Miller	1	The Rope Dancers
Gilbert Miller With Lance Hamilton & Charles Russell	1	Look After Lulu
Oliver Rea With Oliver Smith	1	Juno

co-producers - cont.

Co-producer	No. of Shows	
Charles Russell With Lance Hamilton	1	Nude With Violin
Charles Russell With Laurence Hamilton & Gilbert Miller	1	Look After Lulu
James M. Slevin With John Gerstad	2	Howie Present Laughter
Oliver Smith	2	In The Summer House The Saturday Night Kid
Oliver Smith With Oliver Rea	1	Juno
Rowland Stebbins	1	The Patriots
Gayle Stine	1	The Lovers
David Susskind	1	A Handful of Fire
Theatre Guild	3	Candle in the Wind The Pirate There Shall Be No Night
Theatre Guild With the Elizabethan Theatre trust and St. James Place, Ltd.	1	Summer of the 17th Doll
Malcolm Wells With Daniel Blum	1	The Country Wife
Robert Whitehead	1	The Emperor's Clothes

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