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## ABSTRACT

### THE INFLUENCE OF THRUST AND PROSCENIUM STAGE FORMS ON AUDIENCE RESPONSE TO A PRODUCTION OF HAMLET

by Lorraine Haugk Gross

Many people in the contemporary theatre advocate the use of the thrust stage theatre because of the actor-audience relationship which exists in this theatre form. Other theatre practitioners prefer the form of actor-audience confrontation found in the proscenium theatre. Preference for a given form is normally based upon a belief that form has a function in producing the "ideal" aesthetic response within the audience. However, a review of the literature shows little agreement as to the influence of stage form on audience response and no studies exist which deal specifically with the influence of stage form on audience response. As a result, this study was undertaken to compare the influence of the thrust and proscenium stage forms on audience response. The data for the study were derived from questionnaires completed by thrust and proscenium theatre audience members viewing essentially the same production of Hamlet. The scale responses of the two audiences were compared by the extension of the median test to determine if the responses were significantly different. Scales examining components of the same aesthetic experience were ranked by each audience's median response to determine the relative importance of each component.

The results of this study both support and refute concepts in the literature.

A summary of the findings of this study follows:

More respondents preferred the thrust than preferred the proscenium stage form.

The major reasons cited for preferring the thrust stage were: it fostered audience involvement with the performance, naturalness on stage, intimacy and better visibility. The reasons most cited for preferring the proscenium stage were: better focus, greater familiarity, and less awareness of other audience members.

Stage form had some influence on audience response. However, there were also many instances when there were no significant differences in response due to stage form. In other instances the influence of stage form seemed to be negated or enhanced by special aspects of the production. For example, the non-illusionistic, raked stage thrusting through the proscenium arch may have negated the proscenium barrier effect.

The audience's intellectual response was more important in the thrust theatre; while its emotional response was more important in the proscenium theatre. The illusion of reality was more effectively created in the proscenium theatre. Although extensive and more dominant in the proscenium than in the thrust theatre, enjoyment of the production as a theatrical performance was a relatively unimportant response.

The focus of the audience was affected by stage form. Somewhat more emphasis was placed upon the technical elements in the proscenium theatre, and upon the actor and audience in the thrust theatre.

Factors which combined to create a particular aesthetic response varied in the thrust and proscenium theatres. Often the contribution of a factor toward the creation of a given response reflected the importance of that factor in the particular theatre form.

The thrust advocates' predictions of the effect of various experiences, such as the audience members' awareness of the floor, awareness of the audience, or imaginative involvement in the performance, upon the aesthetic response were often accurate. However, these effects often were achieved in both theatre forms.



Lorraine Haugk Gross

Because this study dealt with a relatively unexplored area, the results of the investigation should be of interest to all theatre artists. With a knowledge of the influence of stage form on audience response, the theatre practitioner could better utilize his art to evoke the audience reaction he desires. It should be noted, however, that this study has only begun the examination of the relationship of stage form to audience response. Because of the number of uncontrollable variables inherent in the performance situation, as well as the ephemeral nature of the aesthetic response, this investigation was limited to description. Specific interpretations of the findings do not extend beyond the cited examples.

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ON AUDIENCE RESPONSE TO A PRODUCTION OF HAMLET

By

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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

#### Statement of Problem

Many theatre practitioners believe that the theatre of the future will be the non-proscenium, thrust stage theatre.<sup>1</sup> The history of twentieth-century theatre architecture shows a gradual but definite evolution in theatre form from nineteenth century's proscenium theatre to the thrust stage theatre of the mid-sixties. Principles for building theatres of the future support the concept of the non-proscenium stage.<sup>2</sup> Proposals for future theatres such as those of the Ford Foundation's Program for Theatre Design inevitably result in theatres with forms of thrust stages.<sup>3</sup> Important new theatre buildings such as the Guthrie Theatre and the Vivian Beaumont Theatre at Lincoln Center are being constructed with thrust stages. This contemporary focus on the thrust stage is based upon the theory that a more ideal relationship exists between the player and the audience when the player is "thrust" into the midst of that audience than when he remains behind the proscenium frame.

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<sup>1</sup>For the purposes of this study a thrust stage will be defined as a stage which is surrounded on three sides by members of the audience.

<sup>2</sup>Norman Marshall, "Principles for Building the Theatre of the Future," World Theatre, IV, 3 (Summer, 1956).

<sup>3</sup>The Ideal Theatre: Eight Concepts (New York: The American Federation of Arts and October House Inc., 1962).

Thrust stage advocates maintain that this stage aids in producing the ideal actor-audience relationship by creating a form and degree of involvement and participation on the part of the audience members unobtainable in a proscenium theatre. These theorists believe that this occurs in a thrust stage theatre for a number of reasons:<sup>4</sup>

A thrust stage theatre allows the spectators to be elevated above and around the stage rather than being placed before it so that they see the actors, their gestures, and their movements three-dimensionally against the spacial area of the stage.

The audience members' focus becomes more general and ever changing, thus forcing them to participate actively in the performance by following the point of emphasis which, by elimination of a complex setting, has become the moving actor.

The lack of a completely illusionistic setting forces the audience members to utilize their imagination creatively and actively to "see" in their mind's eye more than is physically presented on the stage.

The audience members are constantly reminded, through their view and contact with other audience members, as well as through

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<sup>4</sup>Most advocates of the thrust stage present these ideas in some form. See Chapter II for a detailed analysis of the ideas. The following were the major sources for this composite list:

Ned Alan Bowman, Contemporary Theatre Architecture: Two Divergent Perceptual Influences (Pittsburgh: Publications on Theatre Technology, University of Pittsburgh, 1963).

Ned Alan Bowman, "The Ideal Theatre: Emerging Tendencies in Its Architecture," Educational Theatre Journal, XVI (October, 1964), 29.

Douglas Campbell, "Acting, Directing and the Guthrie Theatre," Drama Survey, III, 1 (Spring-Summer, 1963), 105-11.

Tyrone Guthrie, "A Director Views the Stage," Design Quarterly: The Tyrone Guthrie Theatre, LVIII (1963).

Tyrone Guthrie, A New Theatre (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1964), 68-72.

The Ideal Theatre: Eight Concepts.

Richard Leacroft, "Actor and Audience: Part Two," Royal Institute of British Architect's Journal, LXX (April-May, 1963), 149-204.

Frederic McConnell, "Using the Open Stage: A Ten Year Experiment at the Cleveland Play House," The Theatre Annual, XVII (1960), 48-67.

Richard Southern, The Open Stage (London: Faber and Faber Limited, 1953).

the lack of any attempt at completely illusionistic settings that they are watching a theatrical performance on a stage, not reality or life.

The thrust stage form provides for the possibility of more intimate contact between actor and audience by placing them in closer proximity, unseparated by any physical or illusionistic barriers.

Thus they believe the theatre aesthetic experience in a thrust stage theatre is a unique but ideal theatre experience.

Not all agree that the thrust stage is the ideal theatre form or that it provides for a more satisfying theatre experience than the proscenium stage.<sup>5</sup> Whether it is a more three-dimensional form is questioned by some writers since any given audience member sees the action from a stationary point in space. Proscenium advocates object to the thrust stage because of the problem it presents in controlling the audience's focus since every audience member sees the actors from a very different vantage point. They also object to the focus upon other audience members which exists in the thrust stage theatre. All theatre practitioners agree that the proscenium stage makes it possible to create a more illusionistic picture. Many believe scenic illusion

<sup>5</sup> Advocates of the proscenium theatre advance contrasting ideas in some form. See Chapter II for a detailed analysis of their ideas. The following were the major sources for the arguments here presented:

W. Bridges-Adams, "Proscenium, Forestage and O," Drama, No. 62 (Autumn, 1961).

Ivor Brown, "What Kind of Stage?," Drama, No. 48 (Spring, 1958) 23.

John Mason Brown, The Art of Playgoing (New York: W. W. Norton and Company, Inc., 1936).

Norman Marshall.

Arthur Risser, "Nine English Theatres Reflect a Philosophy of Theatre Design," Educational Theatre Journal, XIX, 2 (May, 1967).

Horace W. Robinson, "An Approach to Theatre Planning," Educational Theatre Journal, I (December, 1949).

Kenneth Tynan, "The National Theatre," Theatre, II (New York: Hill and Wang, 1965).

aids in inducing an empathic state within the audience member and thus enhances his aesthetic experience; therefore they feel the proscenium stage is the more valid form. Although an audience member may be more intimately involved with the actor in a thrust stage than in a proscenium stage theatre, many proscenium proponents desire the audience member's detachment from the stage activities, believing the establishment of aesthetic distance to be of prime importance in the achievement of a truly satisfactory response within the theatre goer. Thus proscenium advocates offer a contrasting interpretation for the importance and influence of each of the factors cited by thrust advocates as advantages achieved by the use of the thrust form.

The fact that the thrust and proscenium stage forms are physically different is undeniable and in itself unimportant. It is important, however, for the theatre practitioner to KNOW what effect each stage form has on the audience members' aesthetic experience. Which of the theories relating to the influence of stage form on audience response are valid? What is the effect of stage form on the audience members' emotional and intellectual responses to the performance? What is the effect of stage form on the audience members' perception of the production as "reality" or awareness of the production as a theatrical presentation? What specific factors inherent in the performance on a given stage are responsible for existing differences in audience response? Although many theatre practitioners have proposed answers to the questions raised here, their ideas have not been objectively reaffirmed by the audience members themselves.

### Objectives of the Study

The broad objective of this study is to examine the influence that thrust and proscenium stage forms have upon the audience members' aesthetic experience.<sup>6</sup> The specific goals of this study are:

1. To describe the differences in audience members' perceived responses to a performance of Hamlet as presented in thrust and proscenium stage theatres.
2. To attempt to identify the factors inherent in each stage form which contribute to the differences in audience response.

### Organization of Study

The research design for this study combined descriptive and analytical methods to study the influence of stage form on audience response. The research began with a comprehensive library survey of the available materials concerning the theatre aesthetic experience and the influence of stage form on this experience. Data for this dissertation were derived from the responses to a questionnaire completed by audience members attending thrust and proscenium stage productions of Hamlet as presented by the Michigan State University Performing Arts Company. Chapter III fully describes the procedures employed in this study. The questionnaire responses were coded and the computer utilized to perform statistical analyses of the data. Findings and the investigator's interpretation of the findings are

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<sup>6</sup>For the purposes of this study the terms "aesthetic experience" and "aesthetic response" refer to the sensations and emotions evoked within the audience member by the observation of the theatrical performance.

presented in Chapter IV of this dissertation. Conclusions are presented in Chapter V.

#### Limitations of Study

Because this study delves into an unexplored area of theatre research its methods must be exploratory and descriptive. No truly experimental study could be designed because there are a number of uncontrollable variables inherent in a performance situation and because no verified method has been developed to analyze the aesthetic experience. Thus interpretations of the findings of this research must be limited to the population studied. Although the findings suggest the possibility of formulating general theories concerning the influence of stage form on the audience member's aesthetic experience, these theories can not be offered as established facts without further verification. However they do indicate areas needing further study under a more controlled environment.

#### Significance of Study

This study will delve into an area of theatre research, the importance of which is just beginning to be appreciated: the question of the influence of stage form on audience response. Originally stage-audience relationships were evaluated on purely physical basis. We now know this is not enough.

Both stage apparatus and auditorium are complex technical organisms. At the same time they involve esthetic organization of a very subtle order. The positioning of actor and spectator in space, a basic requirement, cannot be solved by the scientific diagrams of the paths of sight and sound. Visibility, audibility, proximity, only yield basic yardsticks.



A specific quality of the audience-performer relationship has to be met with spatial equivalence in the arrangement of seating and stage. . . .

By exploring the essential nature of the theater process, the concepts of architecture can go beyond the partial answers of the technical specialists. They can avoid the inevitable obsolescence of the purely technical and specific and project forms in lasting value.<sup>7</sup>

One of the major purposes of the Ford Foundation theatre project was to "stimulate architects, designers, and theatre people generally to continuing analysis about the stage and its environment."<sup>8</sup> Peter Larkin stresses the importance of studying the interrelationship of the physical theatre environment and the theatre aesthetic experience:

Some directors prefer to elevate the actor above the MEAN auditorium level, some thrust him through the proscenium into the audience. . . . Actor-seating relationships should be made as a study in esthetics. Why look for intimacy and spectacle under the same roof? Why does one theatre seem more intimate, righter, than another?<sup>9</sup>

The Princeton University Conferences on Theatre research suggested a number of important areas for theatre research, some of which relate to the concern of this investigation. One suggestion by George Gunkle was the study of:

Physical Relationship of Audience to Action:

Specific variables here are distance of audience from action; angle of audience in relation to action. But what dependent variables should be chosen?

In general, it may be well to note that so-called "audience response" studies are still rather virgin territory; there has never been a really good and useful determination of what dependent variables are measurable, relevant, significant. What are the significant parameters of "audiences"? Or: what do we

<sup>7</sup>G. M. Kallmann, "Interiors Contract Series '56: Theatres," Interiors, 116 (September, 1956), 109.

<sup>8</sup>The Ideal Theatre: Eight Concepts, 7.

<sup>9</sup>Ibid., 27.

want to have happen in the audience when a production is taking place?<sup>10</sup>

Harold Burris-Meyer suggested two areas requiring research which are touched upon in the present study. "We ought to study presentation techniques on the basis of audience response. This might give us some solid facts to help evaluate the bear pit stage or the cafetorium."<sup>11</sup> Related to this is his suggestion to study "the effectiveness of various theatre forms as measured in audience psycho-physical response to standardized presentation".<sup>12</sup> Thus there is a growing awareness among theatre practitioners and architects of the need for research in the areas here being investigated.

The results of this study will add to the slowly developing body of knowledge concerning stage form and its influence on the theatre aesthetic experience. The findings should be of interest to theatre artists and architects. With the knowledge of audience response in relation to a given stage form, directors, actors and designers could more successfully plan their productions to achieve the responses they desire. Leon Shiman believes that in today's theatre the desired response is often unachieved because of the failure to consider the influence of stage form.

The meaning of a play is often distorted by its presentation. Many dramatic and musical works whose meanings depend on isolation and distance from the audience have been presented in arenas or with audience on several sides; while many meaningless as

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<sup>10</sup> George Gunkle, "Possibilities for Experimental Research in Theatre," Educational Theatre Journal, XIX, 2A (June, 1967), 280.

<sup>11</sup> Harold Burris-Meyer, "Research in Theatre Architecture," Educational Theatre Journal, XIX, 2A (June, 1967), 281.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

illusion have been continually forced behind the wall of a proscenium. It is common to find a play calling for an actor to dominate the stage picture being seen in a theatre for thousands which dwarfs him by huge settings on a cavernous stage.<sup>13</sup>

Theatre architects, too, could design more satisfactory theatres if they were aware of the influence of theatre architecture on the audience response and if they could determine the form of response their client seeks.

My experience has been that where something has gone wrong with the building, the building program, it's because the program was never really determined to begin with, because the owner said, "I want to build a structure for the performing arts, or the fine arts," and he never really enlarged upon it. . . .

If the purpose of the theatre is not made clear from the beginning, you end up with what is prevelant throughout this country - the stages work, but not particularly well for any one thing. . . .

The key thing is, "what kind of theatre, fellas?" For what purpose? . . .<sup>14</sup>

This study, then, is significant in that it delves into important, unexplored areas of theatre. The results will be valuable to theatre people who are continually striving to better understand their art.

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<sup>13</sup> Leon G. Shiman, "Theatres for Tomorrow," Saturday Review, XXXV (April 28, 1962), 44.

<sup>14</sup> "The Changing Practice: Theatres," Progressive Architecture, XXXVI (October, 1965), 166-167.

## CHAPTER II

### REVIEW OF LITERATURE

#### Influence of Stage Form on Aesthetic Experience

Many twentieth century theatre practitioners have come to believe that one of the principle factors determining an individual audience member's aesthetic response is the form of the stage. Nicoll suggests that stage form is the primary factor influencing the aesthetic experience: "The essence of the theatre rests in the relationship between stage and public."<sup>1</sup> He speaks for many theorists when he writes that the tendency of our times to experiment with divergent forms of theatre architecture is

. . . based upon something which had hardly been fully appreciated before our time - the fact that the different theatre shapes and sizes not only are aptly harmonious with different kinds of production, but also create different impressions upon their audiences.<sup>2</sup>

Although the idea that stage form influences audience response has been widely accepted, no concensus has been reached nor has research clarified exactly what the specific effects of various stage forms are upon the audience member's theatre experience. As Thomas Creighton

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<sup>1</sup>Allardyce Nicoll, The Theatre and Dramatic Theory (New York: Barnes and Noble, 1962), 29.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., 195.

suggested, "the debatable and debated questions are many."<sup>3</sup> And most of the questions debated are verified or rejected primarily on the basis of the personal experiences of the individuals debating them.

Fundamental Differences Between Thrust  
and Proscenium Theatres

The fundamental physical difference between the thrust and proscenium stage theatres is fairly easy to observe, and is in itself not especially debatable. Ned Bowman contrasts the two forms by characterizing the proscenium theatre as including:<sup>4</sup>

- (1) The establishment of a physical barrier to separate the world of reality from an ideally-conceived art world
- (2) the arrangement of many spectators before the art work, each isolated from awareness of all others, in such a way that all view the play from as nearly the same ideal vantage point as possible
- (3) the disposition of the art work behind the frame so that an ideal vantage point is directly across from the picture frame;

and the thrust stage theatre as including:

- (1) the denial of any barrier between audience and art work
- (2) the variable relation of action to audience space, with audience members arranged so the individual is frequently reminded of his involvement in an audience seated in a theatre
- (3) the diminishing of the subtended angle between the playing area floor and the rake of a seating bank facing it, causing the spectator to look down onto the stage, rather than across into it;

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<sup>3</sup>Thomas Creighton, "Theatre Design," Craft Horizons (March-April, 1962), 38.

<sup>4</sup>Ned Bowman, Contemporary Theatre Architecture: Two Divergent Perceptual Influences, 1-2.

Etienne Souriau contrasts the two forms with an analogy to the cube and the sphere.<sup>5</sup>

This cube process entailing the complete bringing into concrete existence of a small, well-defined fragment, cut out of the universe of the work has three striking traits from the point of view of the theatre.

In the first place, its realism. Everything within the limits of the cube must be incarnated or represented concretely - it may be more or less stylized, but it must be made apparent to the senses. . . .

In the second place, its orientation or aspect. The little cube is open on the spectator's side. It faces him. It exerts a force over him, a dynamic force in a horizontal plane pointing like an arrow into the hall. If the actor turns his back on the audience for a moment, it is his back that exerts the force during that moment. . . .

And finally, its third trait: its predetermined confining architecture. This little piece of universe is internally organized, and the physical aspects of this organization are imposed from start to finish on everything that happens within the box. The whole incident, the comings and goings of the characters, all their stage business are constrained and given shape in advance according to the stage setting adopted . . .

And now let us pass on to the principle of the sphere. As you will see, it is entirely different. Its practical and aesthetic dynamism are not at all the same (of course, I am simplifying once more, and taking an exaggeratedly pure and extreme case).

No stage, no hall, no limits. Instead of cutting out a predetermined fragment in the world that is going to be set up, one seeks out its dynamic center, its beating heart, the spot where the action is emotionally at its keenest and most exalted. . . . The actors or the group of actors who incarnate this heart, this punctum saliens, dynamic center of the universe of the work, are officiating priests, magicians whose power extends outward indefinitely into open space. . . .

There is no scenery either, properly so-called, . . . Only what is needed to fix momentarily what will later become intensified and take on local significance in the world that is being suggested. . . .

We do not find here, or at least we find the minimum of, face-to-face relationship, that arrow-like function of the actor with reference to the spectator. As much as possible, the spectators are in the cathedral or around the platform as participants; they are, so to speak, invited along with the actor to enter the universe that is being conjured up. . . .

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<sup>5</sup>Etienne Souriau, "The Cube and the Sphere," Educational Theatre Journal, IV, I (March, 1952), 11.

Although Souriau's ideas are couched in a more theoretical framework than Bowman's, they only begin to suggest the influences that differences in stage form have on the spectator's response. Stephen Joseph is perhaps more honest than any other writer in his assessment of the obvious differences between the two forms of theatre and the effect of these differences.

In comparison with the enclosed stage, having the acting area in the same room as the auditorium inevitably means a loss in the amount of scenery that can be used, and a gain in proximity between actors and audience. The aesthetic advantages and limitations of each form need not be dealt with here. They are being hotly debated, and there are not yet enough examples of the new forms to lift the debate much above the level of airing theories and prejudices. But it seems clear that the new forms of theatre provide opportunities for simplicity in production and staging, placing considerable emphasis on the actors, and requiring comparatively modest buildings.<sup>6</sup>

These, then, seem to be the fundamental differences between thrust and proscenium theatres: a separation or lack of separation between spectator and actor, the arrangement of the spectator before or around the stage, the ability or lack of ability to provide realistic scenery, and a limited or limitless focal point. These differences are thought to result in different forms of perception and response by the spectators. Theories relating to these contrasting responses and the desirability of creating them are discussed in detail in the following sections.

#### Two-Dimensional or Three-Dimensional

The viewing of live sculptural three-dimensional actors is considered to be a very important aspect of the theatre aesthetic experience.

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<sup>6</sup> Stephen Joseph, Planning for New Forms of Theatre (London: The Strand Electric and Engineering Co. Ltd., Publishers, 1963), 6.

The prime advantage the theatre has over present rivals in the field of public entertainment - radio, movies and television - is the fact that it is the real thing, not a photograph or recording of it. This unmatched asset should be fully exploited.<sup>7</sup>

Most all theorists agree with Bel Geddes that the theatre "is the only form which can be entirely three-dimensional."<sup>8</sup> However, they do not agree as to the specific influence of stage form upon the audience members' perception of the dimensionality of the actors and action.

Thrust stage advocates insist that the audience members in thrust stage theatres perceive the actors and setting more three-dimensionally than do audience members in proscenium stage theatres. Richard Leacroft suggests that very early attempts to return to the stage of Shakespeare, the thrust stage, were influenced by the belief that things seem more three-dimensional on this stage.

It was further considered that the important stage picture is that created by the movements, attitudes and gestures of the actor, and the relationship of the movements of one actor to those of the rest of the company as seen three-dimensionally on the spatial area of the stage. If this sculptural picture was to be fully appreciated then the actor must be drawn out from behind the picture-frame, and placed once more in the "auditorium", where these movements could be fully appreciated by the surrounding audience.<sup>9</sup>

Discussing the importance of achieving three-dimensionality on stage,

Bel Geddes wrote:

. . . Performed on a stage that is not behind a hole in a wall, with an audience on three or all sides of the stage, a play

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<sup>7</sup> Norman Bel Geddes, "Design for New Theatre," New York Times Magazine (Nov. 30, 1947), 24.

<sup>8</sup> Norman Bel Geddes, "Flexible Theatre," Theatre Arts, XXXII (June, 1948), 49.

<sup>9</sup> Richard Leacroft, 149.



will take on a character which cannot be achieved with a proscenium separating actors from the audience.<sup>10</sup>

The contrast between the two-dimensional proscenium and three-dimensional thrust is also cited by Guthrie as a reason for his preference for the thrust stage.

In an age when movies and TV are offering dramatic entertainment from breakfast to supper, from cradle to grave, it seemed important to stress the difference between their offering and ours. Theirs is two-dimensional and is viewed upon a rectangular screen. The proscenium is analogous to such a screen by forcing a two-dimensional choreography upon the director. But the open stage is essentially three-dimensional with no resemblance to the rectangular postcard shape which has become the symbol of canned drama.<sup>11</sup>

Not only is the thrust stage felt to be viewed more three-dimensionally than the proscenium, but often movement on this stage can be blocked more three-dimensionally than it can on a proscenium stage.

In the proscenium theatre he [Guthrie] feels cramped and confined by having to compose movement and grouping so that the actors are facing the audience most of the time. He delights in the sense of freedom that he has on the open stage, where he is no longer limited to two-dimensional grouping. He finds that in scenes of action and excitement the big wheeling and spinning movements which can be made offer a choreographic freedom that is quite beyond the range of the proscenium theatre.<sup>12</sup>

Other theorists, however, do not agree that one stage form is more three-dimensional than another.

I have heard it speciously argued that a projecting stage adds "a third dimension" to acting. What a grotesque abuse of

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<sup>10</sup> Norman Bel Geddes, "Flexible Theatre," 49.

<sup>11</sup> Tyrone Guthrie, "A Director Views the Stage," Design Quarterly: Tyrone Guthrie Theatre, No. 58 (1963), 4.

<sup>12</sup> Norman Marshall, "Guthrie Here, There and Everywhere: A Portrait of a Man Who Won't Stay Still," Drama Survey, III, 1 (Spring-Summer, 1963), 102.

language! All live acting is in three dimensions, as opposed to screen and television acting, which has two; and I cannot understand how the ability to see one's fellow spectators behind the actors materially adds to the sculptural roundness of the experience. If we erected a few rows of seats behind the actors on the stage of the Old Vic, would it really make the productions more three-dimensional? The truth, I suspect, is that proximity creates the illusion of an extra dimension, and in a theatre of reasonable size, you don't need a tongue-shaped stage to achieve proximity.<sup>13</sup>

Even more logically and simply, Arthur Risser writes:

Questionable are the claims made for the open stage in that the production is essentially three-dimensional as compared to the two-dimensional character of film, television, and the proscenium stage. Does the spectator from his fixed seat in an open-stage theatre see more, except other persons in the audience, than he does in the conventional theatre form with its direct confrontation?<sup>14</sup>

#### Focus

A far less uniform view of the performance is achieved in the thrust stage theatre with audience members seated around the stage than in a proscenium theatre, where audience members are seated before it. Various theories relating to the specific changes in focus which result from the differences in seating arrangements as well as to the importance of these changes have been advanced.

#### General and Specific Focus

The audience member's focus is felt to be more specific in the proscenium theatre and more general in the thrust stage theatre. Thus a theatre practitioner's belief in the desirability of general or

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<sup>13</sup> Kenneth Tynan, 83.

<sup>14</sup> Arthur Risser, 150.

specific focus often determines his preference for the thrust or proscenium stage.

The ability to concentrate the audience's attention on the stage from a fairly uniform vantage point is felt by many to be highly desirable and they therefore prefer the proscenium theatre.

Donald Oenslager, the American designer, is of the opinion that "to look across the acting area of an open stage and view the banks of spectators is most confusing and distracting. The picture stage can be effectively contrived so that the stage and theatre are more closely joined together". N. Laskaris, the Greek theatre architect, Alec Clunes, the English director and Walter Unruh, the German theatre engineer, are among those who are strongly in favor of the picture stage. Unruh considers that the optical limitation of the picture frame aids the concentration of the audience.<sup>15</sup>

Horace Robinson summarizes the arguments for the specific focus afforded in the proscenium theatre:

But if the auditor is to see and hear what has been provided for him to see and hear and nothing else, as is essential if the production is to have its proper and full effect, the theatre structure must provide proper focus. It must insure that all the members of the audience will attend to the same thing at the same time. Is it not logical that the focus of a theatre audience be in front of the individual auditor? (As has already been pointed out, this is essential to the best audibility and visibility.) And yet one modern planner has listed among the advantages of his theatre "the proximity of the actor to his audience, his ability to walk around them rather than having to project his role from behind footlights."

A theatre should be planned to provide not only proper focus but also unity of impression. It is not enough that the members of an audience all attend to the same thing; they should receive the same impression of it. The impression received by the auditor in the left front section should be the same as that of the auditor in the right rear, in the top row of the balcony, or on the opposite side of the acting area. As far as hearing is concerned, this is insured by relatively small dimensions and adequate acoustic engineering, but as far as seeing is concerned, unity of impression can be achieved only by a common point of view. All members of the audience

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<sup>15</sup>Norman Marshall, "Principles for Building the Theatre of the Future," 6.

should view the performance as nearly as possible from the same point.<sup>16</sup>

Some theatre-goers and critics like the thrust stage simply because it provides a different kind of focus than does the proscenium theatre. "Change is the important thing."<sup>17</sup> Others prefer the thrust stage because they believe the different kind of focus found there is also the more ideal kind. Norman Bel Geddes disagrees with the arguments set forth in favor of the focus of the proscenium theatre.

I do not agree that the "best view of any animate object is from a position on a line at right angles to the predominant direction of the movement of the object." It is not the most dramatic view. Impact gains as an object comes toward the viewer. It is the visual crescendo. A common example is in movies such as a railroad train or an animal rushing toward the camera. This is infinitely more dramatic than to see the same train and the same animal rushing parallel with the camera. . . .

Nor do I concur that "all members of the audience will attend to the same thing at the same time," assuming this means that every member of the audience must experience everything identically. One of the positive ways that the theatre differs from movies, radio, and television is that its audience does not have a single angle of view. In the theatre - especially with the elimination of the proscenium stage, but even with it - each individual in the audience has a slightly different angle of view.<sup>18</sup>

Perrottet Von Laban offers an even more telling argument for the ever changing focus of the thrust; he believes contemporary man's eye is conditioned to pursue points of visual interest rather than to focus on a stationary point or area such as would tend to be provided by the proscenium.

<sup>16</sup>Horace W. Robinson, 98.

<sup>17</sup>Stephen Joseph, Actor and Architect (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1964), 96.

<sup>18</sup>"Theatre Planning: A Symposium," Educational Theatre Journal, II (March, 1950), 1-2.

Man himself has acquired a far greater degree of visual consciousness thanks to the more mobile and colorful rhythm of everyday life and to the modern visual media of information such as films, television and illustrated newspapers. The eye tends rather to pursue things than to retain them, the result of which is quicker perception and a greater susceptibility to boredom.<sup>19</sup>

General or specific focus, which is more desirable? Arguments are set forth in favor of each kind, but none of these arguments is supported by empirical evidence.

#### Focus on Actor

Thrust proponents argue that the elimination of elaborate settings and the closer proximity of the actor to the audience in the thrust theatre focuses the audience's concentration on the actor. Certainly one of the important reasons for renewed interest in the Shakespearean stage was "that this form of theatre placed emphasis on the actor and the play."<sup>20</sup> Saint-Denis explains in detail what effects he believes the thrust stage has on the actor. The thrust stage

. . . presents the actor with certain advantages and difficulties which will be multiplied by the very fact of proximity. The actor has lost the security of the picture-frame stage. He is exposed: pierced by the eyes of the spectators, who are on all sides of him but one, he realizes that, at the same time, his power over the public has increased; but he also discovers that the full exercise of this power will depend much more on the authenticity of his acting than it did in the old "operatic" staging. His exposed position and proximity will immediately reveal artifice and theatrical clichés. Furthermore, the actor feels that the expressiveness of his back, of his entire body, becomes as important as that of

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<sup>19</sup>Perrottet Von Laban, "In Search of Valid Form," World Theatre, IV, 3 (Summer, 1955), 44.

<sup>20</sup>Richard Leacroft, 149.

his face on which can be read the slightest internal reaction.<sup>21</sup>

This focus on the actor is highly desired for

. . . the actor surrounded by his audience on a stage where he is not dwarfed and dimmed by the scene painter is a solid and compelling figure; and he and the dramatist, creating everything between them, can reach a far more imaginative and intimate relationship with the audience.<sup>22</sup>

However, not everyone believes that the elimination of the setting results in greater focus upon the actor. Arthur Miller suggests that although an actor surrounded by scenery may be lost in the scenery, an actor surrounded by audience members may become undifferentiable from the audience.

It's hard to focus attention the actor as actor in those square theatres that are surrounded by seats. The actor becomes less and less differentiated from the people watching. . . .<sup>23</sup>

#### Focus on Technical Elements

Very little has been written about the relative importance of various technical elements on the proscenium stage. However, since the proscenium stage is accepted as the norm, much has been written suggesting how focus on technical elements in the thrust theatre differs from that in the proscenium theatre. The lack of scenery on the thrust stage is believed to result in greater emphasis on properties, lighting, and costumes. Percy Corry suggests that, in a sense, lighting can be

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<sup>21</sup>Michel Saint-Denis, "Chekhov and the Modern Stage," Drama Survey, III, 1 (Spring-Summer, 1963), 78.

<sup>22</sup>Nicoll, 32.

<sup>23</sup>The Ideal Theatre: Eight Concepts, 11.

considered a substitute for scenery in creating atmosphere and illusion.

You must decide whether or not you can dispense with suggestive scenery, or representational scenery, or scenery of any description and allow the audience to imagine what the setting should be; and by sensitive lighting you can then help the creation of that imaginative concept.<sup>24</sup>

Tanya Moiseiwitsch stresses the increasing importance of properties and costumes in the thrust theatre.

I think that properties take on more significance when there is nothing else to show where the scenes take place. The texture and the decoration both of the properties and the clothes call for even more careful planning than on a proscenium stage, where the footlights may help to keep the audience guessing.<sup>25</sup>

The audience is also thought to be much more aware of the details in the properties and costumes in a thrust than in a proscenium theatre.

Where scenic items, furniture, clothing, etc., are used, the items must be perfect, as otherwise their nearness to the audience reveals any flaws, and the audience that is not carried away by the force of the acting may well become only too aware of the last minute safety-pin or the goose-pimples on an otherwise fair skin.<sup>26</sup>

#### Focus on Audience

The audiences of thrust and proscenium theatres are thought to differ greatly in the extent to which they are aware of the other audience members. This difference is important because the extent and kind of awarenesses each audience member has of his fellow audience

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<sup>24</sup>Stephen Joseph, Actor and Architect, 101.

<sup>25</sup>Tanya Moiseiwitsch, "Problems in Design," Drama Survey, III, 1 (Spring-Summer, 1963), 114.

<sup>26</sup>Richard Leacroft, "The Open Stage," Architectural Review, 125 (April, 1959), 257.

members is thought to have a profound effect on his response to the performance. No consensus exists as to the ideal relationship between the individual and the total audience. In a world-wide inquiry Raymond Cogniat, an editor of World Theatre magazine, included the following series of questions:

Should a spectator be left in the solitude of his own individuality or should he be incorporated into that new entity, the audience? By what means? What lighting effects, what colours (dark or light)?<sup>27</sup>

Cogniat summarized the wide variety of responses he received thus:

Mr. August Defresne writes: "the theatre is the art of the mass, the collectivity and not the individual, it is necessary that each member of the audience should be linked to that community and that, without losing his individuality, he should sense the general atmosphere and at the same time help to build it." Mr. Jo Mielziner confirms this: "It's impossible to be solitary in an auditorium with 1000 or 3000 other people. The enjoyment of theatre is basically a communal experience."

Comparison with the cinema enables us to understand these ideas more clearly. At the cinema each spectator remains isolated: he is unaware of the presence of his neighbours and does not need their presence. At the theatre, on the contrary, this seems to be essential. Mr. Victor Glasstone declares that: "In the theatre the spectator is part of an audience. He should be aware of his fellows, they should be all around him, near to him, visible, audible." Mr. Edward C. Cole is one of the few to defend the opposite point of view: "It is a personal belief", he says, "that conscious participation is not the purpose of the theatre-goer, but that he wishes rather to lose himself, to be carried away to be completely 'won over' by the performance and that the auditorium can contribute to this . . . It should be possible for a spectator even to forget that there are people sitting all around him." Mr. Wim Vesseur gives a more subtle interpretation: "It is necessary", he says, "for the theatre-goer to isolate himself in his seat like the anonymous end of an imaginary cone extending between his perception and the stage, but he must also feel he is the centre of the audience and, if he so desires, be able to embrace this audience in one glance and feel himself surrounded by it." Notice, for

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<sup>27</sup> Raymond Cogniat, "The Theatre Facade, Entrances and Auditorium," World Theatre, VII, 2 (Summer, 1958), 101.



instance, how during the interval the audience rises and looks around the auditorium, seeking a kind of approval in this multiple presence.<sup>28</sup>

Because of the difference in the form of the auditorium, the thrust stage audience member is thought to have an increased awareness of his fellow audience members while the proscenium stage audience member can "forget that there are people sitting around him".<sup>29</sup> Opinions differ as to the effect of an audience member's awareness of other audience members on his reaction to the performance. Thrust stage advocates believe that the variations in audience viewpoints and audience members' awareness of themselves as a part of the audience result in a more satisfying theatrical experience. Wendel Cole characterizes the thrust stage audience as "an audience which participates in the production by being aware of itself as an audience and of its relationship to the staging methods."<sup>30</sup> Tyrone Guthrie recognizes that audience members focus not only on the stage but also on other audience members in a thrust stage theatre. He believes the audience member's awareness of other audience members in a thrust stage theatre enhances his aesthetic response by making it impossible for him to forget he is in a theatre and by forcing him to accept theatre as theatre rather than as an illusion of reality.<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> Ibid.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid.

<sup>30</sup> Wendel Cole, "Theatre in Three Dimensions," Players Magazine, XXXIX (Feb., 1963), 132.

<sup>31</sup> Illusion and anti-illusion are discussed in greater detail later in this chapter.

We're not aiming at illusion. We're aiming to present a ritual that is sufficiently fascinating and interesting to take the spectators out of themselves and make them go into the world of make believe; the reenactment of fiction by actors. And I think that experience is enhanced, not mitigated, if you're conscious of participating in it with other people: if you actually see - not in as bright a light as the actors, not as close to you as the actors, but beyond, behind, above and around them - the other people. The ideal auditorium for me would be like acting in the bottom of a saucer with the people going up and around you, piling in, but close, close, close.<sup>32</sup>

Bridges-Adams not only criticizes the variations in viewpoint which are found on a thrust stage theatre, but also suggests that being aware of other audience members does not enhance your enjoyment of the performance.

It was of the essence of dramatic illusion that our Hamlet should have his audience on three sides of him at least; our forestage must jut out into the stalls. As to this contention I am still in doubt. For example you, sitting on Hamlet's left, are entranced by his To be or not to be, when for a moment you allow your gaze to wander from his noble face to his no less noble legs. Suddenly you find yourself looking between them into the eyes of my respected Editor, who is sitting on Hamlet's right. If you have the privilege of Mr. Ivor Brown's acquaintance, what is the drill? Do you give the nod - or smile - or recognition? Obviously you cannot wave your programme and say Hullo. But even if the eyes you encounter, framed in those noble legs, are those of a complete stranger, is your illusion heightened by an arrangement that gives you no more than an uncertain half-share in Hamlet's face?<sup>33</sup>

Thus although he agrees with Guthrie that focus on the other audience members destroys the illusion of reality in a theatre, he does not agree that this enhances the theatrical experience.

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<sup>32</sup>"From the Symposium," Theatre Arts, XXXXVI (May, 1962), 18.

<sup>33</sup>W. Bridges-Adams, 27.

### Illusion and Anti-Illusion

Because the focus in a proscenium theatre is considered to be specific and stage centered while the focus in a thrust theatre is considered to be general, stage and audience centered, these forms of theatre are thought to differ fundamentally in that one is believed to be illusionistic and the other anti-illusionistic.

The proscenium stage is deliberately designed to encourage the audience to believe that events on stage are "really" taking place, to accept a palpable fiction for fact; whereas the open stage discourages "illusion" and emphasizes that a play is a ritual in which the audience is invited to participate. The audience is so arranged that spectators can see one another around, and beyond, the more brightly lighted stage. This certainly does not encourage illusion. You can hardly be expected to believe that you are right there at the Court of King Arthur when just over Lancelot's left ear you can descry, dim but unmistakable, the Halversons, who keep the corner store. This, however, does emphatically, and I think valuably, imply that theatre-going is a sociable, a shared experience, and that the audience, unlike the audience for movies or television has an active part to play, has to do its share towards creating the performance, can make or mar the occasion.<sup>34</sup>

### Anti-Illusion and the Thrust Stage

One of the results of failing to physically separate the actor and audience in the thrust stage theatre is the inability to create an illusion of reality.

On the scenic side - and here there is no qualification; you can never on the open stage provide scenery in such a way that an illusionistic picture is created and so that you may suppose you are looking not at actors on a stage, but at real people in a fragment of the actual world.<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>34</sup>Tyrone Guthrie, A New Theatre, 69-70.

<sup>35</sup>Frederic McConnell, 54.

Most thrust stage advocates desire the loss of illusion created by this stage form, believing this loss of illusion to be a part of the new aesthetic related to this form. The following quotations emphasize thrust stage advocates' belief in the importance of eliminating the illusion of reality from the production.

Naturalism and realism in the sense of "Belasco's Box" are limiting and crippling; photographic actuality is self-defeating and puts the emphasis in the wrong place.<sup>36</sup>

Whatever realities may be in the playwright's mind, they are best communicated to the audience by means of suggestion and imagination, through the unconscious realization.<sup>37</sup>

We're trying to get away from the illusionism of proscenium theatre and to remove all traces of resemblance to the screen. . . . In the Guthrie theatre . . . the actors and audience share the same space, whereas in the proscenium theatre they occupy different spaces. The actors move about in a box; the audience sits in a bowl. Bring the actor out of his box and put him plumb in the middle of the audience and there is no illusionistic barrier between them. They breathe the same air; they live in the same world.<sup>38</sup>

There is no pretense that this is magic. You see, the whole idea of the thing is not to create illusion - I don't believe that is what the theatre is about. I don't believe people go to the theatre to be presented with a palpable fiction and think it's really happening.<sup>39</sup>

Rather than presenting the audience with an illusion of reality, the thrust stage makes it impossible for the audience members to forget that they are in a theatre.

The open stage is a most promising architectural form today, because of its freedom from restriction - and especially the

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<sup>36</sup> Ibid., 59.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid., 63.

<sup>38</sup> Douglas Campbell, 109.

<sup>39</sup> Stephen Joseph, Actor and Architect, 45.

restriction of illusion. . . . In an open stage theatre, the illusion that you are not in a theatre is hard to create; the anti-illusion that that is just where you are and that it is a reality is equally hard to suppress.<sup>40</sup>

The thrust stage theatre, then, is theatre theatrical.

They (new stages) are all more truly theatrical than the picture-frame arrangement. The theatre is a place for make-believe, a game which actor and audience share as willing collaborators and with a kind of mutual trust. That is why I am a little mistrustful of the word illusion which suggests a conjuring trick aimed to deceive the audience.<sup>41</sup>

It is in the anti-illusion, in the theatricalism, in the awareness that the play is only a play, achieved in a thrust stage theatre that many thrust advocates find the real excitement of this stage form. The theatre experience is often compared with one's viewing of a painting.

Leonardo, in painting the Mona Lisa

. . . has not tried to create an illusion, to persuade you that this is a real woman, but to make a comment on real women in terms of paint laid on to canvas. Similarly, the theatre is endeavouring to make a comment on real life by symbolical re-enactment of real life, but not to create illusion. . . .<sup>42</sup>

The thrust stage, many believe, replaces the illusion of reality, created on the proscenium stage, with ritual.

The form of a theatre necessarily imposes a particular character on the performances which are given in it, and as the theatre at Stratford is like a temple, there was a strongly ritualistic character about both Richard III and All's Well That Ends Well. . . .<sup>43</sup>

<sup>40</sup>Richard Southern, Seven Ages of Theatre (New York: Hill and Wang, 1961), 288.

<sup>41</sup>Alfred Emmet, "Later Stages - A Reply," Drama, No. 48 (Spring, 1958), 25.

<sup>42</sup>Stephen Joseph, Actor and Architect, 45.

<sup>43</sup>Tyrone Guthrie, Robertson Davies, Grant Macdonald, Renown at Stratford (Toronto: Clarke, Irwin and Company Limited, 1953), 120-121.

Guthrie consciously tries to achieve a theatre of ritual.

We're not aiming at illusion. We're aiming to present a ritual that is sufficiently fascinating and interesting to take the spectators out of themselves and make them go into the world of make believe; the reenactment of fiction by actors.<sup>44</sup>

Davies describes this theatrical ritual which Guthrie seeks as:

. . . conventions of gesture, movement and dance performed within a prescribed area in order to evoke the essence of something greater than themselves. . . .

Ritual is man's way of evoking what is too great for realistic portrayal. Ritual in these productions brings us a strong sense of the wonder, the beauty, the horror, the tenderness, the merriment and the overwhelming complexity, abundance and glory of life - in fact, it brings us to what is truly romance. . . .<sup>45</sup>

Other theorists suggest that the illusion of realism available on the proscenium stage is replaced on the thrust stage by some new kind of realism. When discussing the production of The Touch of the Poet at the Cleveland playhouse, a wide apron stage theatre which has eliminated the formal proscenium, Frederic McConnell suggested that they had achieved a new kind of realism,

. . . an inspired and transcendent communion between audience and players and a complete sense of the reality of their being characters in the play rather than mere real people masquerading as actors. Realism is as old as the hills. The theatre from the beginning served its community because at the outset it evoked certain realities which met response from its audience, a response, however, which was contingent on something more inherent than mere photographic illusion. We have for some years been preoccupied with a form of superficial naturalism of purely external implication. But also we have been groping for a deeper or neo-realism, representative of a deeper world and an art consciousness within us. Thus a play may embark upon the most mundane plane, yet have poetic style, a freedom of movement, intimacy and harmony between actor and audience. Modern realism is not merely an extension of the slide rule of

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<sup>44</sup>"From the Symposium," 18.

<sup>45</sup>Tyrone Guthrie, Robertson Davies, Grant Macdonald, 121.

Belasco, Antoine and Zola, the closed-in slice-of-life school of disease, sin and corruption, but a profound penetration in terms of a maturing art and a salient interpretation of the realities of contemporary life. Suggested realism, fragmentary and selective illusion as executed on the open stage can assist in the projection of these values.<sup>46</sup>

Later McConnell describes this new realism as a kind of "poetic" realism:

With light and the spacial freedom of the open stage, formalization and aesthetic unity contribute a concordant illusion which transcends material and external garnish. In our experience with the age old form we have learned to extoll the effectiveness as well as inspiration of poetic and spiritualized realism through light and substance.<sup>47</sup>

Douglas Campbell believes this new reality is a psychological reality.

"What matters is not the physical but the psychological reality."<sup>48</sup>

Others believe that illusion is an important part of theatre and that the thrust stage theatre has simply changed the form in which the illusion is manifest.

I personally love illusion. To be disillusioned seems to be part of my everyday life, and so I like to go to the theatre for its illusion. We seem to be moving into an age of experiment, and we may have to be tested to destruction in this process, without some of the aids we've become accustomed to through the proscenium and so on; . . . People may discover, it has been suggested, that their own powers of imagination can produce far more effective illusion than the many artificial aids.<sup>49</sup>

Peter Larkin believes that the new stages attempt to create a new illusion; an illusion which suggests that the audience member is a part of the actor's environment rather than an outside observer of that environment.

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<sup>46</sup>Frederic McConnell, 54.

<sup>47</sup>Ibid., 63.

<sup>48</sup>Douglas Campbell, 110.

<sup>49</sup>Stephen Joseph, Actor and Architect, 102.

This effort to create an illusion in the audience of being "immersed in a selected environment" to maintain a unity of space between viewers and performers has been the most common objective of these projects and the most pointed aspiration of the modern theatre house in contrast to the old houses where no audience participation was expected.<sup>50</sup>

The inability to create an illusionistic setting on the thrust stage is thought to have some very positive effects on audience response. The lack of realistic setting on a thrust stage is believed to be a factor which forces the audience member to become involved in the performance.

It's up to the actors to suggest what is missing of the realistic setting. Actors always have to do this in some degree anyway, because, however real a setting may look it never is really real. An actor can suggest a great deal of physical reality - whether he's out of doors or indoors, for instance - by the way he behaves. Shivering and looking up in a particular way can suggest being out in the cold. But the audience has to watch out for such signals and interpret them to get at the truth. And in doing this, it finds itself involved. If everything is spelled out in the setting, it takes the audience much longer to get involved. If a complete picture is presented to it, it doesn't need to think.<sup>51</sup>

The audience members not only become involved, but their imagination is also thought to be stimulated by the lack of scenic background.

The loss of elaborate scenery is in itself no great detriment, indeed its absence permits the imagination free rein undisturbed by attempts at simulating realism with the conventional items of scenery.<sup>52</sup>

Vera Roberts says much the same thing:

But the essence of theatre lies in the participation of audiences. Those who watch and listen are not mere eavesdroppers. They must have their minds challenged and their imaginations stretched by an artistic representation to which they can bring something of their own. The too-realistic stage

<sup>50</sup>The Ideal Theatre: Eight Concepts, 10.

<sup>51</sup>Douglas Campbell, 110.

<sup>52</sup>Richard Leacroft, "The Open Stage," 257.



setting is its own worst enemy, and besides, the motion picture can do this sort of thing much better than the stage can. By its very nature theatre must ask that its audience "piece out our imperfections with your thoughts." And lucky it is that this is so. For thus theatre is freed from literalness to artistic theatricality, and can take all times, places, and ideas for its province, evoking whatever thought or emotion it chooses by a judicious selection of stage decor, lighting, and music.<sup>53</sup>

Many thrust stage advocates insist that the removal of the illusionistic setting enhances the acting. Early in the century, Antoine, the advocate of realism, expressed this idea.

The atmosphere is created with almost unbearable intensity - the public is no longer seated in front of a picture, but in the same room, by the side of the characters. This extraordinary impression has never before been produced to this extent; such a complete elimination of all "theatrical elements" makes for a detailed perfection in acting.<sup>54</sup>

One critic found the lack of an illusionistic background has both advantages and disadvantages.

On the one hand, the anti-naturalistic staging gave a more intense reality to the expression of the characters and thus to the meaning of the play. I had lived with them, I had made the rounds, I had received from Astrov, from Vanya, from Sonia, confessions which were more intimate, more aglow than ever before. On the other hand, thinking back upon it, it now seems to me that I received from the play a revelation that was strong, but harsher than is the work in its essence. Was it because of the excessive austerity of the settings in which these characters lived? They appeared to me to be separated from their furniture, from their familiar possessions . . . If, in this production, I was able to commune closely with the life of these people, I did not observe the life of things. I did not hear any of those silent conversations which can occur . . . Was it the absence of a background which deprived us of perspective? Was it the lack of detail in the setting? I do not know. The experience was unforgettable, incomparable, but incomplete; there was missing a certain sensitivity, like a breath of the ephemeral.<sup>55</sup>

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<sup>53</sup> Vera Mowry Roberts, On Stage (New York: Harper and Row, 1962), 498.

<sup>54</sup> McConnell, 50.

<sup>55</sup> Saint-Denis, 79.

Illusion of Reality and  
the Proscenium Stage

Proscenium advocates believe that illusion is desirable and that the actor-audience separation created by the proscenium barrier is necessary for establishing the illusion of reality on stage.

If the director is to have a chance of making his scenes life-like he must have this frame, sharply separating the stage picture from the spectators, so that these spectators may, from their darkened seats, enjoy a peep-show view of the solidly set and naturalistically illuminated spectacle put before them.<sup>56</sup>

Ivor Brown describes the importance of the proscenium in creating theatrical illusions, and his belief in the importance of such illusions:

For my own part, I cannot understand the argument that theatrical work becomes more real or has more emotional impact if it is spread among the audience. Acting is pretending, the creation of an illusion, and is therefore assisted by conditions which enable members of the audience in a theatre (which is the Greek word for "a seeing-place") to suspend their disbelief. I do not find myself closer to King Lear if a lot of people pretending to be his Ancient British subjects or his enemies are swirling round my seat. I have had plenty of moments in the Assembly Hall during Edindurgh Festivals when I was submerged in combative Romans, Greeks or Highlanders who were storming the platform-stage jutting far out into the auditorium. These demonstrations, even under the marshalling genius of Tyrone Guthrie, have seemed to me more embarrassing than impressive, quite apart from the naturally arising apprehension that the spear-shaking Shakespearians will be achieving actual casualties in the audience as well as mimic slaughter on the stage in their loyal ambition to be a genuine combat-force.

With all the good will I can muster for the appreciation of open-stage performances, I find myself still attracted by the old partition of player and public. The phrase "magic box" applied to the theatre probably maddens the builders on new lines. They will say that they do not want to be boxed in:

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<sup>56</sup> Allardyce Nicoll, The Development of Theatre (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Co., 1957), 201.

that it is imprisonment. They want to flow out and attack us instead of luring our attention inwards. All I can say is that such external attack, for me, destroys the illusion at which theatre aims and that I have found far greater pleasure in the "magic" box than I have ever done in roofed arenas or unroofed gardens. C. E. Montague demonstrated long ago, when he reviewed Benson's productions of Richard II at Flint Castle, that going to the real spot is absolutely fatal to theatrical persuasion. On the artificially lit stage, with the actor in full potency, a property sword can be a sword indeed.

Drama is art achieved with artifice and I see no reason why the artificial conditions of the proscenium arch and the picture-stage should be anything but beneficial to it.<sup>57</sup>

Proscenium advocates also argue that it is unnecessary to remind the audience members that they are in theatre. They know this. The anti-illusionist

. . . keeps shouting at us that the stage is unreal and that we must not surrender to illusions, regardless of the fact that we are fully aware of this, and do not need Brecht to jump up and down in front of the Mona Lisa to remind us that it is only a picture. We like pictures.<sup>58</sup>

Thus, although proscenium advocates are less verbal about the desirability of illusion as achieved in this form of theatre, they indicate by their continued work in the proscenium form and by their occasional writing that they believe that a theatre in which one can forget oneself and become immersed in the make-believe realism of the play is a desirable form of theatre.

#### Illusion and Anti-Illusion Unrelated to Stage Form

As with all facets of the influence of stage form on audience response, the question of the creation of illusion has received only

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<sup>57</sup>Ivor Brown, 22-23.

<sup>58</sup>Dennis Johnston, "What's Wrong With the New Theatres," Theatre Arts,<sup>47</sup> (August-September, 1963), 18.

a cursory examination by theatre aestheticians. Questions that are hardly considered are suggested by one comment of Ned Bowman.

There is little evidence to suggest, however, that the technology of illusion, as it is differentiated from the fixed picture-frame arrangement, will soon disappear from the spectator's view. In fact, if any generalization may be safely advanced about coming theatre forms, it is that some degree of scenic illusion is as vital to the living theatre as the mimetic impulse itself.<sup>59</sup>

Is there in fact no less illusion created on the thrust than on the proscenium stage? Does the audience member in any form of theatre accept the production as a theatrical illusion? Certainly the fact that thrust stage advocates are referring to new forms of realism and illusion indicates that these elements have not and will not be eliminated from theatre. Nor have thrust stage designers always used bare stages which require our imaginations to supply the setting. Rather, many have attempted to fill the stage with realistic detail. Proscenium designers, in contrast, have often filled their stages with non-illusionistic settings and settings which project beyond the proscenium frame. Do these settings provide the same values as the non-illusionistic thrust stage settings? Is the design of the setting rather than stage form the important factor? Thrust advocates do not believe so.

In an auditorium built like an alley looking toward a view at the distant end, the surge over the orchestra pit does not alter the essential nature of the view: we are still looking at the actors against the scenery, we are looking at them flat.<sup>60</sup>

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<sup>59</sup> Ned Bowman, "The Ideal Theatre: Emerging Tendencies in its Architecture," 220.

<sup>60</sup> Walter Kerr, "The Theatre Breaks Out of Belasco's Box," Horizon, I, 6 (July, 1959), 44.

The debates continue, but nothing has been done to verify or disprove objectively any of the arguments.

### Involvement Versus Detachment

A feeling of detachment from the performance is thought to be fostered within the audience members in the proscenium theatre, while a feeling of involvement with the performance is thought to be created within the audience members in the thrust stage theatre. The fact that the proscenium stage is more illusionary than the thrust stage is often cited as one of the reasons for the difference. The audience member's unawareness of other audience members in a proscenium theatre, in contrast to his high degree of awareness of the other audience members in a thrust stage theatre, is suggested as another reason for this difference. Many writers speak of theatres of involvement and theatres of detachment.

There are two kinds of theatres today. One is our legacy from the past, the proscenium. The audience peeks into the drama - there is implicit audience removal. The other is a theatre of participation in which audience surrounds the situation.<sup>61</sup>

Perrottet Von Laban compares these two theatres, attributing their differences to the differences in the societies in which they originated.

In the 19th century the auditorium was still conceived as a stable structure. . . . Therefore in the 19th century theatres we find two distinctly separate areas - the stage and the auditorium. The latter is arranged as a large drawing room with three solid walls and a fourth no less substantial, with a hole in it beyond which the other world begins: the world of the stage. . . . People of that period liked to view from a certain distance that exciting distraction which life behind the scenes represented for them, that life of which the

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<sup>61</sup>The Ideal Theatre: Eight Concepts, 109.

falsehood created a mirage of reality, but which never quite lost its disreputable flavour. What took place on the stage must create an illusion, but it was understood that it should remain an illusion; it must not grip the spectator too closely. The frontier between the unreal world of art and the real world of bourgeois society must never be questioned or effaced.  
 . . .

The modern auditorium on the other hand is distinguished by the mobility and rhythmical fluency of its lines. It ceases to be simply a solemn picture frame and becomes the expression of its own ever changing function. It no longer offers aesthetic appeasement of a purely contemplative nature, but tunes itself to the physical and spiritual instability of those who frequent it.<sup>62</sup>

#### Separation, Detachment and the Proscenium Theatre

The proscenium theatre not only makes possible more controlled focus than the thrust stage theatre, but it also creates a barrier between the actor and the audience member. This barrier, the proscenium arch, causes many people to prefer the proscenium theatre.

If one accepts that a dramatic performance involves a form of confrontation and has, or should have a directional quality and that some degree of separation between the stage and auditorium (however subtle) is the essence of theatre, one would obviously favor an arrangement where this is possible.<sup>63</sup>

I prefer the stage with an adaptable proscenium because I am all for separating the world of the stage from that of the spectator. I do not like the mixture of the two worlds.<sup>64</sup>

John Mason Brown believes that the aesthetic distance established between the actor and audience member in the proscenium theatre

<sup>62</sup>Perrottet Von Laban, 43.

<sup>63</sup>Peter Moro, "Penultimate Thoughts on Theatre Design," TABS, XXIII, 1 (March, 1965), 26.

<sup>64</sup>Rene Hainaux (ed.), Stage Design Throughout the World Since 1950 (New York: Theatre Arts Books, 1964), 20.

by the separation of stage and auditorium is desirable in that it detaches us from the activities on stage.

While we may want to know everything worth knowing about these men and women, we may often be comforted by the fact that we do not have to know them. . . .

From the protection of the intervening footlights most of us derive a new courage and a new curiosity. We face what they illumine with an eagerness to see life whole such as few of us show, or are able to show, within the petty confines necessity has forced upon us in our own living. Our tolerance shows as our self-interest is temporarily dimmed with the lowering of the house-lights. Our egos are suspended with our disbelief. Our individual defenses are down. The sentinels who wear our liveries and ordinarily guard us are off duty. Our imaginations are set free. And in their new-found freedom they promptly put our everyday selves to shame by exceeding them in sympathy no less than valor.<sup>65</sup>

Percy Corry seems to agree with Brown while also disputing the idea that unity between actor and audience is destroyed by the proscenium arch.

The competent actor finds no technical difficulty in establishing that unity from behind a proscenium arch. It is his job to do so and he is, in fact, aided by the separation of his world of "realism" from the reality of the auditorium. . . . The emotional response is actually heightened by remoteness; a darkened auditorium and concentration on a lighted acting area induce greater emotional sensitivity and help to suspend rational judgement. . . .

A semi-hypnotic state is voluntarily achieved and this helps to preserve the emotional unity between actor and audience. . . .<sup>66</sup>

#### Involvement and the Thrust Stage Theatre

The primary rallying cry for the thrust advocates is "the aesthetic demand for a closer integration of actor and audience,"<sup>67</sup>

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<sup>65</sup> John Mason Brown, 118-119.

<sup>66</sup> Percy Corry, "That 'Intimate' Stage," TABS, VII, 3 (1949), 5.

<sup>67</sup> Richard Leacroft, "The Open Stage," 256.

the demand for "togetherness."<sup>68</sup>

So far all efforts to suscite the "theatre of tomorrow" have had a common principle: to reinforce the contact between stage and spectators. It is the battle horse of all theorists, no matter what their proposals, and likewise of all architects.<sup>69</sup>

Certainly "an auditorium grouped around a stage rather than placed in front of a stage enables a larger number of people to be closer to the actors."<sup>70</sup> And these people are in the same room with the actors, not separated from them by a proscenium barrier.

Theorists suggest that the thrust theatre audience's "togetherness" with the actors "involves the audience more directly in the dramatic event,"<sup>71</sup> makes "the audience feel [a] part of the show."<sup>72</sup> In the thrust theatre "stage action and the room itself are interlocked, thus binding the audience intimately to the play."<sup>73</sup> Walter Kerr describes his experience as a thrust stage theatre audience member.

Though we were perfectly aware of a vast blur of faces across the platform from us, the presence of our fellow men was not so much distracting as enlivening. We were, all of us, players and playgoers alike, at last in the same building. The actors were doing most of the work as usual, but we were engaged in a communal and reciprocal experience, a candidly acknowledging each other's presence, sharing the field on which battle was to be done, engaged and involved in a meeting that could not help

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<sup>68</sup> Thomas GeGaetani, "Theatre Architecture - Or How Does it Look From Where You're Sitting" American Institute of Architects Journal, XXXVI (August, 1961), 71.

<sup>69</sup> Margo Jones, "Theatre In-the-Round Over America," World Theatre, I, 1 (1951), 21.

<sup>70</sup> Tyrone Guthrie, "A Director Views the Stage," 4.

<sup>71</sup> Thomas GaGaetani, 71.

<sup>72</sup> Richard Southern, 276.

<sup>73</sup> The Ideal Theatre: Eight Concepts, 10.



but straighten our spines, alert our ears, and heighten every capacity for response. Being thoroughly present and not merely eavesdropping, we longed to participate, and savored the sense of being permitted to.<sup>74</sup>

The sense of participation in the performance is thus felt to be an extremely rewarding experience.

In this theatre we ourselves helped to evoke greatness. It was the effect of the temple, we were as necessary to the completeness of what was being done as were the actors and those who stood behind them. We were not spectators, we were part of a great ceremony of evocation and celebration. Was it any wonder, then, that when the plays were over, we were shaken and yet uplifted? We had moved through ritual to romance.<sup>75</sup>

Some theorists suggest that it is intimacy, not involvement, that is achieved in the thrust stage theatre. Many directors have been drawn to the thrust stage because of their desire for intimacy.

I think that most forward-looking directors are trying to get away from the proscenium, not entirely because of the break with naturalism. Certainly, in my own case, (Guthrie writes) the dominant consideration is the great advance in intimacy, the fact that by bending the rows and getting them round an open stage you can get so many people close to the actors.<sup>76</sup>

Although many people agree with Guthrie when he says, "I feel that the intimate contact of the artist with the audience is an advantage, not a disadvantage,"<sup>77</sup> others question the desirability of such intimacy.

I was lucky in a ring-side seat; I could have touched Desdemona as she lay dead. But I also had to observe that she was still breathing heavily after her exertions. And had not there been a faint whiff of moth-ball when the tumultuous Cypriots came

<sup>74</sup>Walter Kerr, 45.

<sup>75</sup>Tyrone Guthrie, Robertson Davies, Grant Macdonald, 121.

<sup>76</sup>Stephen Joseph, Actor and Architect, 47.

<sup>77</sup>Ibid., 104-105.

charging down this bridge that had been so cunningly devised to carry illusion across the curtain-line? Here was all the illusion, and disillusion, that extreme intimacy can give.<sup>78</sup>

Although discussing an experience in an arena theatre, another critic, W. A. Darlington, also felt the proximity to the actors disconcerting:

I felt it a bit disconcerting to find myself sitting beside the household garbage can. I couldn't adjust myself to the fact that the garbage can was in the play and I was not. Also I found it disconcerting . . . when people were being murdered or raped right under my nose, and among my feet.<sup>79</sup>

Certainly many of the New York theatre critics felt that the first productions at Lincoln Center were offensive in that they stressed sexual stage business. Although none of the critics blamed this on the stage form, it is possible that these things were so close, and therefore so real to them that they were offended. Do we need distance in order to accept realistic action?

One critic, David Scase, suggests that detachment can be achieved while still creating audience involvement in an intimate theatre but with psychological, not physical methods.

I know that most people haven't had ladies raped between their feet. However, most of us have sat next to garbage cans, and most of us have observed perspiration at fairly close quarters. The cinema would go all out to try and create a sense of the proximity of perspiration or of rape, or of garbage cans, to make us feel right on top of these events; but somehow one remains detached and can watch this without embarrassment. But when you achieve this in the theatre, and have real proximity it does provoke in many people a sense of embarrassment. I don't know why this is so. I must say, however, in answer to the question, that when I have seen theatre in the round at its best, it has produced more excitement in the audience, particularly in the twenty minutes after leaving the theatre (which is the important time) than the proscenium theatre at its best. . . . But . . . no one should

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<sup>78</sup>Bridges-Adams, 28.

<sup>79</sup>Stephen Joseph, Actor and Architect, 103.

be asked to sit actually on top of the garbage cans! . . . There should be a moat, if you like, a psychological moat, which allows the actor to be close with just that gap between.<sup>80</sup>

In contrast to the writers previously cited, Kitchin believes that intimacy is achieved in proscenium theatres while involvement occurs in thrust stage theatres:

Entrances made down the aisles, actors within touching distance, are not intimate in effect as many advocates of this type of staging maintain, any more than the boxing ring is intimate. In fact, Guthrie's production of Priestley's Dangerous Corner, near the start of his career and on a picture-frame stage, probably conveyed the illusion of intimacy far more closely. Involvement is what occurs on a good open-stage production, as in Waiting for Lefty, and when Correction made his entrance in The Thrie Estaites the entire audience seemed to share the alarm of gamblers interrupted by the police in a vast, illegal casino.<sup>81</sup>

#### Stage Form Not Important Factor

Although interest in new stage forms is very high at the present time, there are a few whispers that perhaps changes in stage form do not produce changes in the theatre aesthetic experience. Robert Brustein stresses the idea that the "ideal theatre" sought by many will not be achieved by merely changing theatre's physical form.

The whole proscenium controversy, then, strikes me as an elaborate evasion of the real problems of our theatre, shifting our attention to purely formal considerations when we should be examining Broadway economics, Broadway timidity, Broadway opportunism, the hit-flop mystique, the general imitation of what is current and fashionable, and the absence of any commitment to anything higher than mere survival and success. Chekhov - who is now almost as maligned by the critics as the theatre he wrote for - probably had the last word to offer the

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<sup>80</sup> Ibid., 104-105.

<sup>81</sup> Laurence Kitchin, Mid-Century Drama (London: Faber and Faber, 1960), 93.

detractors of the proscenium when, sixty-four years ago, he had his Treplev say, "I come more and more to the conviction that it is not a question of new or old forms, but that what matters is that a man should write without thinking about forms at all, write because it springs freely from his soul." It is this urge of the spirit and strength of conviction alone - and not formal experimentation or new theatre buildings - that will turn our theatre at last from a cheap and gaudy side show into a temple of enduring art and truth.<sup>82</sup>

Peter Jay suggests that a person's preference for a particular stage form is perhaps influenced now by custom and the desire to be "up to date" than by any change in the aesthetic response he experiences in the different forms.

. . . Whatever may be said about the theatre of "the detached spectator" (the end and proscenium forms) and the theatre of "the participating audience" (the peninsular and island forms) this would seem to be a matter of basic temperament as modified by custom and the often conflicting desire to be thought up to date.<sup>83</sup>

Some theorists credit other components of the theatre production with having far more power to influence the spectators' response than has stage form itself. René Allio believes that it is the use made of the stage that is important.

More than the form of the stage and the theatre, it is the way in which one makes use of this space (from the point of view of decoration as well as production and acting) that will determine whether the nature of the performance given will be one of illusion or not, one of participation or of alienation. The problem of theatre architecture as it is generally raised today is thus seen in its true light; it is a false problem. "Alienated" theatre is possible on an Italian-style stage, and make-believe theatre on an apron stage. It depends on what use is made of the stage and has nothing to do with its specification.<sup>84</sup>

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<sup>82</sup>Robert Brustein, "Scorn Not the Proscenium Critic," Theatre Arts, XLIV, 5 (May, 1960), 9.

<sup>83</sup>Peter Jay, "Theatres: Stage and Auditorium," Architectural Review, 133 (March, 1963), 177.

<sup>84</sup>Stage Design Throughout the World, 20.

Thus it is the directors, actors, and designers who determine the effect of a production on the audience member.

R. C. Morpeth, the secretary of the New Zealand Drama Council, considers that the answer to the problem of whether plays can be made to fit both open and frame stages depends largely upon the imagination of the director. Johan Falck the Swedish director makes the same point when he says: "The magic of the theatre depends upon the imagination and the artistic power shown by producers and actors, a power that must be adaptable to any kind of stage."<sup>85</sup>

Others, like Oscar Budel, believe the actor-audience contact a play achieves lies inherently in its script, and therefore the playwrights, not the architects or theatre artists, are responsible for achieving the desired form of actor-audience relationship.

Does the cause of this loss of contact (with the audience) not lie too deep for a mere change in the outer form of theatre to remedy? Such a contact can never be one sought on the basis of psychologically undifferentiated atmosphere between stage and audience, since it eliminates a priori the tension between the two cells of theatre, and therefore their very existence. Does a remedy, then, not lie first and foremost in the very vehicle of theatre, its repertoire? Do not the playwrights rather than the architects have the primary responsibility here?<sup>86</sup>

It is also possible that the spectator's physical distance from the stage has more influence on his response than the stage's form. The question of distance has generally been ignored unless it was coupled with that of stage form. However, Richard Leacroft has recognized the problem.

What then is "close-enough", and what is the maximum extreme from the stage that may be considered to fall within this definition? Definitions vary: John Conway of Seattle requires

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<sup>85</sup> Norman Marshall, "Principles for Building the Theatres of the Future," 7.

<sup>86</sup> Oscar Budel, "Contemporary Theatre and Aesthetic Distance," Brecht, ed. Peter Demetz (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1962), 82-83.

no more than three rows of seats surrounding the Penthouse acting area: at Stratford, Ontario, the number of rows is increased to 15 or 16, with a total distance of some 60 ft. 0 in. from the stage to the extreme seats. Between these two extremes lies a factual point, a distance that should not be exceeded, and this is probably the most important item on which it is essential that a large scale survey should be carried out. . . .<sup>87</sup>

These people then, seem to suggest that there should be no difference in audience response to a given production simply because of a change in stage form. Others also feel this way. However, since changes in stage form are the rule today, the idea that the stage form itself makes little difference is seldom discussed.

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<sup>87</sup>Richard Leacroft, "Actor and Audience Part II," 201.

## CHAPTER III

### METHODS AND PROCEDURES

#### Preliminary Investigations

This research evolved from the investigator's interest in the thrust stage. Why was a performance viewed in a thrust stage theatre a more exciting theatrical experience for me than one viewed in a proscenium theatre? Why was this stage form being so quickly and widely accepted? What changes would this stage shape have on the concepts, practices, conventions and aesthetics of theatre? In an attempt to answer these questions a comprehensive review of the literature relating to the thrust stage was undertaken. The Stratford Festival Theatre at Stratford, Ontario, and the Tyrone Guthrie Theatre were visited during a number of different seasons to observe the utilization of this stage form. Personal observation and the literature suggested that the key to the interest in the thrust stage was the contrast in the actor-audience relationship this stage form offered in relation to that found in a proscenium theatre. However, contradictions between theatre practitioners' opinions concerning the aesthetics of the thrust stage,<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>See Chapter II.

conflicts between recorded theory and observed practice,<sup>2</sup> as well as the fact that the theorists were attempting to explain audience response by their personal response, indicated that a more objective, audience-oriented approach to the problem was needed.

During the summer of 1962 the writer was a member of a special committee of three students in a graduate seminar in Arena Staging and Production which undertook to develop, administer and analyze an audience questionnaire as a means of gaining more information about the aesthetics of arena theatre.<sup>3</sup> The questionnaire was distributed to July, 1962, audiences of Michigan State University's Summer Circle Theatre. A second, informal audience survey was undertaken by the writer at Michigan State University's Summer Circle Theatre in 1965.<sup>4</sup> During this season Summer Circle had been converted to a thrust stage theatre; thus the responses on this second survey reflected feelings of audience members in a thrust stage theatre. The collection of valuable and informative data through both of these studies indicated that audience members were willing to cooperate in such endeavors. These studies

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<sup>2</sup>Theory suggests that illusionistic scenery is neither necessary nor desirable on the thrust stage. However, in the 1965 production of The Country Wife at Stratford, Ontario, for example, the neutral stage floor was covered with black and white squares. Elaborate properties and stage dressing were added for specific scenes. To illustrate, the scene at the town square utilized elaborate storefronts, push carts and the like. There was little doubt that the designer, Desmond Heeley, was presenting the audience with more than a suggestive setting.

<sup>3</sup>Lorraine Gross, Marilyn Steegstra and Roger Long, "Summer Circle Audience Questionnaire." Unpublished paper offered as part of the requirements of a seminar in Arena Theatre at Michigan State University, East Lansing, Michigan, July, 1962.

<sup>4</sup>Lorraine Gross, "Thrust Stage Theatre Audience Survey." Unpublished study conducted at Summer Circle Theatre, Michigan State University, East Lansing, Michigan, July, 1965.



also raised a very important question: What influence did the form of the theatre in which the respondent was viewing the performance have on his responses?

### Research Design

The design for the present research evolved from the desire to attempt an objective study of the influence of stage form on audience response. Thus a questionnaire which could be quantitatively analyzed was selected as the data collection instrument. Because the researcher believed that no valid audience response study could be conducted unless the audience being investigated was a natural audience in a real performance situation, actual audiences in performance situations were used. This meant there would be some random variables inherent in the situation. The exploratory format of the research and the lack of a completely controlled experimental situation necessitated that the study be descriptive in nature. Thus the research design for this study utilized descriptive methods to describe and analyze variations in audience members' responses to essentially the same, but not clinically the same, theatrical production when viewed on either a thrust or proscenium stage.

### The Play

Hamlet was selected as a suitable play for use in this study because Hamlet has had countless successful productions in both thrust and proscenium stage theatres, beginning with successful thrust stage productions by the Lord Chamberlain's Company.

### The Production

The production of Hamlet utilized as the vehicle for this study was Michigan State University's Performing Arts Company's production, which toured to 21 communities and played to 15,385 people during its 1965-1966 season. Actors, director, costumes, and general interpretation were unchanged throughout the tour. It should be noted that the setting was not a typical proscenium stage design. Rather, the setting utilized on the proscenium stages, through the use of a raked platform, tended to exhibit certain aspects of the thrust stage. See Illustrations I, II, and III. The setting had to be altered slightly to accommodate itself to the variations in stage size between the two proscenium theatres utilized for data collection. In the thrust stage theatre the ramp was eliminated, for it would have blocked the vision of various audience members. The play was reblocked for the performance in the thrust stage theatre in order to provide a production suited to that stage form. To implement the changes in blocking, the director held a blocking rehearsal and a run-through of the new blocking on the stage the afternoon of the performance.

### Instrument Development

A questionnaire was selected as the data collection instrument. It was anticipated that a questionnaire would be the most ideal data collection instrument for this study for the following reasons:

1. Questionnaires could be distributed to all audience members; thus a larger sample size could be obtained through their use than through the use of more costly and time consuming interviews. It was felt that a large sample size would help to negate any bias which might result from the inclusion of atypical audience members.
2. All respondents could complete the questionnaire within the same relative time span and as soon after viewing the performance as they were free to do so.



Illustration I  
Hamlet at the Western Michigan University Theatre



Illustration II  
Hamlet at the F. A. Bower Theatre



Illustration III  
Hamlet at the Arts Theatre

3. Questionnaires insure uniformity in presentation to all respondents because question wording, question order, and instructions are exactly the same on every questionnaire.
4. Questionnaire respondents have anonymity and therefore do not attempt to give answers they believe to be desired or "right."
5. In this particular study it was deemed desirable for the respondent to be able to compare his responses on various questions, for it was hoped that his selection of a given point on the scale would have the same relative meaning throughout the questionnaire.

Non-verbal line scales rather than descriptive, verbal scales were used on all forms of the questionnaire for four reasons:

1. The nature of the phenomenon being investigated, the aesthetic experience, was not clearly measurable as a yes or no experience, but required some form of continuum on which to evaluate its degree or extent.
2. The difficulties which might result from variations in respondents' word interpretation would be minimized by use of a divided line rather than a number of descriptive adjectives.
3. The repeated use of the same scale would eliminate the necessity for extensive directions and thus save respondents time and encourage them to continue to the next scale.
4. Responses on the scales could be evaluated quantitatively.

Ideas derived from the literature, from previous questionnaires and from personal observation relating to the influence of stage form on audience response were utilized in formulating the pretest questionnaires. Scales, fill in and open-ended questions were included. See Appendix I for samples of the pretest cover letters and questionnaires.

The original form of the questionnaire was tested during the opening run of Michigan State University's Performing Arts Company's production of Hamlet at Fairchild Theatre on November 30th and December 1st, 1965. Prior to the performance, season coupon ticket holders were contacted by phone and asked to cooperate in the instrument

development procedure. An effort was made to include the three kinds of audience members in the pretests: students, faculty, and townspeople. The cooperating patrons picked up their questionnaires at the box office before each performance. A cover letter repeating the instructions given by phone and a stamped return envelope were included with each questionnaire. The respondents returned the completed questionnaires to the investigator or ushers after the performance or later by United States mail.

Form B, a second form of the questionnaire, was tested during the December 3rd and December 4th performance at Fairchild Theatre. This form of the questionnaire differed from Form A primarily in format, question order and wording to determine if such changes would have any effect on response. Suggestions culled from early returns of Questionnaire A were also utilized in developing Form B. Administration procedure for Questionnaire B was the same as that for Questionnaire A, described above. However, the cover letter of Form B attempted to explain the use of the scales more thoroughly than had that of Form A.

The final questionnaire, the instrument used for data collection for this study, incorporated theory from the literature on theatre aesthetics and stage form and the results of Questionnaires A and B. See Appendix II. The open-ended questions on the earlier questionnaires were used to identify many of the factors which affect audience members responses. Question type, wording and order were also finalized after examining pretest responses and studying pretest respondents' comments. The final questionnaire differed significantly from the previous ones

in that a greater attempt was made to identify the audiences' responses as they related to the basic qualities of the theatre aesthetic experience rather than as they related to specific moments or actions in this production of Hamlet. Thus it was hoped that the respondents would not attempt to specifically criticize or praise this particular production, but rather, given this production, would indicate the type and quality of their aesthetic experiences during the performance, as well as attempt to identify the factors which contributed to their particular aesthetic responses. Questions concerning awareness of production elements which, it was hypothesized, might be influenced by stage form were retained in the final questionnaire. All but two of the open-ended questions were eliminated from the final questionnaire, because pretest respondents indicated open-ended questions required an excessive amount of time to answer.

Specific questions on the final questionnaire were designed to obtain answers to each of the following questions concerning the influence of stage form on audience response:

Why do theatre goers prefer a given stage form?

Will the audience members perceive the production as being more three-dimensional in the thrust than in the proscenium theatre?

How will stage form affect the audience members' focus on the various production elements?

Will the thrust stage audience members be more aware of themselves as members of an audience than the proscenium stage audience members?

What is the effect of the audience members' awareness or lack of awareness of their fellow audience members on their enjoyment of the performance?

Will the thrust stage audience members be more aware of the production as a theatrical presentation than as "reality," while the

proscenium stage audience members are more aware of the production as "reality" than as a theatrical performance?

What factors will contribute toward the achievement of the illusion of reality on stage in each form of theatre?

What factors will contribute toward reminding the audience members that they are watching a theatrical performance in each form of theatre?

What is the effect of audience members' perception of the production as an illusion of reality or as a theatrical performance on their enjoyment of the performance.

Will the thrust stage audience members be more involved in the performance than the proscenium stage audience members?

What is the effect of audience members' involvement with, or detachment from, a performance on their enjoyment of the performance?

How will stage form influence the audience members' intellectual response to the production?

How will stage form influence the audience members' emotional response to the production?

What factors will contribute toward the audience members' intellectual response to the production in each form of theatre?

What factors will contribute toward the audience members' emotional response to the production in each form of theatre?

What are the effects of the audience members' emotional and intellectual responses on their enjoyment of the performance?

### Data Collection

#### Questionnaire Distribution

The final questionnaire was distributed to audiences in three of the theatres to which the Performing Arts Company's production of Hamlet toured. The theatres selected for the study were the Western Michigan University Theatre at Western Michigan University in Kalamazoo, Michigan, the F. A. Bower Theatre at Flint Community College in Flint, Michigan, and the Arts Theatre at Waterloo University in Waterloo,



Ontario. The theatre at Waterloo was a thrust stage theatre; the other two theatres had proscenium stages. The thrust stage theatre at Waterloo had a 504 seat house; the theatre at Kalamazoo had a 348 seat house; and the theatre at Flint had a 352 seat house. However, the seating of the theatre at Flint was arranged in Continental style.<sup>5</sup> Thus, although neither of the proscenium theatres had a house as large as that of the thrust stage theatre, the distance from the back row to the stage at Flint was similar to that at Waterloo.

At all theatres a plain envelope, with a questionnaire and a stamped return envelope inside, was distributed to each audience member as he entered the auditorium. The first page of the questionnaire included two paragraphs explaining the project to the audience member thus:

We are asking tonight's audience to cooperate in a study designed to measure the responses of individual audience members to a theatrical performance. We realize that this request is rather unusual; however, we hope you will take the time to aid us in our research, for it is only with your assistance and the assistance of every audience member that we can do any depth analysis of the factors which combine to form the theatre aesthetic experience. Since this study is concerned with measuring the responses of every individual audience member, please record YOUR responses to the questions as you interpret them. There are no correct or better answers because each individual's aesthetic response is uniquely personal and extremely valuable to our study.

Please do not complete the questionnaire beyond the first page until after you view tonight's performance. After completing the questionnaire you may find it interesting to compare your responses to those of the other members of your theatre party. DO NOT, however, allow others to influence your answers.

There was a staple on the upper left corner and a seal on the lower right corner of the questionnaire to encourage the audience member to

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<sup>5</sup>Continental style seating is a seating arrangement in which the rows of seats are widely spaced to provide easy access across every row without disturbing seated patrons.

refrain from reading the questionnaire proper before viewing the performance. Observation indicated that most audience members did not break the seal to read the questions before viewing the performance.

In total, 1711 questionnaires were distributed. The following is a breakdown of questionnaire distribution:

<u>Location</u>	<u>Date</u>	<u>Number Distributed</u>
Kalamazoo	Saturday, January 8, 1966	309
Kalamazoo	Sunday, January 9, 1966	315
Flint	Friday, January 14, 1966	305
Flint	Saturday, January 15, 1966	322
Waterloo	Saturday, January 22, 1966	460

#### Questionnaire Return

Questionnaires were returned by cooperating respondents in a pre-addressed envelope to Michigan State University, Department of Speech. Approximately one-third of the distributed questionnaires were returned. The following breakdown indicates the number of returned, valid questionnaires from each audience.

<u>Location</u>	<u>Day and Date</u>	<u>Number Returned</u>	<u>Per Cent of Distributed</u>
Kalamazoo	Saturday, January 8, 1966	106	34
Kalamazoo	Sunday, January 9, 1966	106	33
Flint	Friday, January 14, 1966	83	27
Flint	Saturday, January 15, 1966	90	28
Waterloo	Saturday, January 22, 1966	151	33

Most respondents completed the questionnaire fairly soon after viewing the performance. Postmarks indicated that 13.81% of the returned questionnaires were mailed within 24 hours of the performance, 64.75% were mailed within 3 days, while 84.54% were mailed within a week after the performance date.

No follow-up letters were planned or attempted as a method of encouraging further replies for two reasons:

1. Anonymity necessarily would be lost if questionnaires and audience members had to be identified.
2. More importantly, an audience member completing a questionnaire after receiving a follow-up letter would be completing his questionnaire some time after the performance. It was believed that this time lag would impair his ability to recall and evaluate accurately his aesthetic experience.

### Coding

Responses on the returned questionnaires were coded and transferred to IBM cards for processing by Michigan State University's Control Data Corporation 3600 computer. Each blank on the scale was given a numerical identification from 1 to 7:

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

The respondent's answer was then coded as a 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, or 7, depending upon which blank he marked. Unanswered and undecipherable answers, such as those which had two checks on one scale, were coded as 9's. The open-ended questions such as, "Why do you prefer the form selected above," were coded by the investigator by assigning an identification number to each variation in response that was identified. Selected additional information, such as the amount of time which had

lapsed between the questionnaire's distribution to the respondent and the postmarked date of the return envelope, were also coded onto the data card.

### Data Analysis

#### Demographic Data

In an effort to describe the respondents accurately, the demographic data were tabulated separately for each of the performances during which data were collected. Therefore, the demographic data are reported for five groups listed as Proscenium 1 which is the audience at Kalamazoo, Saturday, January 8, 1966; Proscenium 2 which is the audience at Kalamazoo, Sunday, January 9, 1966; Proscenium 3 which is the audience at Flint, Friday, January 14, 1966; Proscenium 4, which is the audience at Flint, Saturday, January 15, 1966; and Thrust, which is the audience at Waterloo on Saturday, January 22, 1966.

Demographic data tabulated include the respondent's age, occupation, sex, and theatre background as a spectator, participant and scholar. The per cent of the respondents from each group who identified themselves as falling within a particular category is reported. Because this is a descriptive study and because many intangible factors influence an audience member's response, no attempt was made to match members of the various audiences when analyzing the scales. Rather, the similarities and differences between audiences merely are reported.

### Analysis of Stage Form Preference

The stage form preferences of the respondents from the various audiences were tabulated. Their stated reasons for preferring a given stage form were also reported.

### Analysis of Influence of Stage Form on Response

In order to determine the influence of stage form on the audience members' aesthetic response, the scale responses of the proscenium theatre audience members were compared with those of the thrust theatre audience members. For this purpose the proscenium respondents from all the proscenium audiences were combined into a total proscenium audience.

### The Scales

The researcher viewed these scales as ordinal scales, as defined by Siegel:

It may happen that the objects in one category of a scale are not just different from the objects in other categories of that scale, but that they stand in some kind of relation to them. Typical relations among classes are: higher, more preferred, more difficult, more disturbed, more mature, etc. Such relations may be designated by the carat ( $>$ ) which, in general, means "greater than." In reference to particular scales,  $>$  may be used to designate is preferred to, is higher than, is more difficult than, etc. Its specific meaning depends on the nature of the relation that defines the scale. . . .

Since any order-preserving transformation does not change the information contained in an ordinal scale, the scale is said to be "unique up to a monotonic transformation." That is, it does not matter what numbers we give to a pair of classes or to members of those classes, just as long as we give a higher number to the members of the class which is "greater" or "more preferred." . . .

The statistic most appropriate for describing the central tendency of scores in an ordinal scale is the median, since the median is not affected by changes of any scores which are above or below it as long as the number of scores above and below remains the same. With ordinal scaling, hypotheses can be tested by using that large group of nonparametric statistical tests which are sometimes called "order statistics" or "ranking statistics."<sup>6</sup>

Because these are ordinal scales the median was used as the index of central tendency. The median is the point on the scale which has 50% of the cases below it, or as Blalock defines it, "a number which has the property of having the same number of scores with smaller values as there are with larger values."<sup>7</sup> The thrust and the proscenium audiences' median response to each scale was computed using the formula

$$M d = l + \frac{N/2 - F}{f} i$$

where

F = cumulative frequency corresponding to lower limits

f = number of cases in interval containing median

l = lower limit of interval containing median

i = width of interval containing median<sup>8</sup>

The blanks on the scales were given numerical values from 1 to 7, going from left to right when coding; therefore, a lower median on a scale indicates a median response to the left on the scale, while a higher median indicates a response more toward the scale's right end.

<sup>6</sup>Sidney Siegel, Nonparametric Statistics for the Behavioral Sciences (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1956), 23-25.

<sup>7</sup>Hubert M. Blalock, Jr., Social Statistics (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, Inc., 1960), 49.

<sup>8</sup>Ibid., 56.

## Extension of Median Test

In an effort to determine the influence of stage form on the audience members' responses to the questions, the responses of the total proscenium audiences, thus of all the participants in the study from the Kalamazoo and Flint theatres, to each scale on the questionnaire were compared to the responses of the participants from the thrust stage theatre at Waterloo. The extension of the median test was used for the comparison. This test is described by Siegel.

The extension of the median test determines whether  $k$  independent groups (not necessarily of equal size) have been drawn from the same population or from populations with equal medians. It is useful when the variable under study has been measured in at least an ordinal scale.

### Method

To apply the extension of the median test, we first determine the median score for the combined  $k$  samples of scores, i.e., we find the common median for all scores in the  $k$  groups. We then replace each score by a plus if the score is larger than the common median and by a minus if it is smaller than the common median. (If it happens that one or more scores fall at the common median, then the scores may be dichotomized by assigning a plus to those scores which exceed the common median and a minus to those which fall at the median or below.)

We may cast the resulting dichotomous sets of scores into a  $k \times 2$  table, with the numbers in the body of the table representing the frequencies of pluses and minuses in each of the  $k$  groups. . . .

To test the null hypothesis that the  $k$  samples have come from the same population with respect to medians, we compute the value of  $\chi^2$  from formula:

$$\chi^2 = \sum_{i=1}^r \sum_{j=1}^k \frac{(O_{ij} - E_{ij})^2}{E_{ij}}$$

where  $O_{ij}$  = observed number of cases categorized in  $i$ th row of  $j$ th column

$E_{ij}$  = number of cases expected under  $H_0$  to be categorized in  $i$ th row of  $j$ th column

$\sum_{i=1}^r \sum_{j=1}^k$  directs one to sum over all cells

It can be shown that the sampling distribution under  $H_0$  of  $\chi^2$  as computed from formula is approximated by the chi-square distribution with  $df = (k - 1)(r - 1)$ , where  $k$  = the number of columns and  $r$  = the number of rows. In the median test,  $r = 2$ , and thus

$$df = (k - 1)(r - 1) = (k - 1)(2 - 1) = (k - 1)$$

. . . If the observed value of  $\chi^2$  is equal to or larger than that . . . for the previously set level of significance and for the observed value of  $df = k - 1$ , then  $H_0$  may be rejected at that level of significance.<sup>9</sup>

For this study, the .05 level of significance was selected as the point at which the Null hypothesis of no difference between responses would be rejected. Since this is exploratory research the investigator believed it would be more desirable to err in reporting a difference where none existed rather than to err in rejecting the possibility of a difference when in fact one did exist; i.e., to commit a type I error rather than a type II error.

#### Ranking

Although the respondents had been primarily concerned with rating, not ranking, their attention had been called to the relative relationship between responses on scales within a given group. The questionnaire instructions stated: "Please indicate on the scales below the degree of your AWARENESS of each of these elements. When rating each element, consider the degree to which you were aware of that element in relation to all other elements listed." As a technique

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<sup>9</sup> Siegel, 179-180.



for further examining the influence of stage form on audience response, the responses of the thrust and the proscenium audiences on scales concerned with the same general questions, such as their degree of awareness of various production elements, or the factors contributing to their emotional involvement in the performance were ranked. The median response on each scale for each audience was used as the criterion for determining the ranking order. A comparison of the resulting hierarchy of factors from the thrust and proscenium stage audiences was then made.

## CHAPTER IV

### FINDINGS AND INTERPRETATIONS

#### The Respondents

The respondents from the various theatres studied were similar in many respects. They were primarily young students or teachers who had had various kinds of previous contacts with theatre. Differences in male-female ratio, age groupings and average numbers of plays seen per year were the most obvious differences between the audiences.

#### Sex

The ratio of males to females in the various proscenium stage audiences was similar, but the male to female ratio varied considerably between the thrust and proscenium audiences. Respondents from all proscenium theatre audiences were predominantly female, while respondents from the thrust audience included slightly more males than females. No explanation could be found for this difference. Table 1 lists the percentage of males and of females in each audience.

#### Age

There was no similarity in age distribution among the various audiences. See Table 2. However, in all theatres over 50% of the respondents were under twenty-two years of age. The thrust audience

TABLE 1.--Sex distribution in percentages within each group of respondents

Sex	Audience*				
	Prosc. 1	Prosc. 2	Prosc. 3	Prosc. 4	Thrust
Male	33.96	27.36	26.51	32.22	52.32
Female	64.15	67.92	68.67	66.67	45.03
Unknown	1.89	4.72	4.82	1.11	2.65

\*Prosc. 1 is the January 8, 1966 audience at Kalamazoo, Michigan.  
 Prosc. 2 is the January 9, 1966 audience at Kalamazoo, Michigan.  
 Prosc. 3 is the January 14, 1966 audience at Flint, Michigan.  
 Prosc. 4 is the January 15, 1966 audience at Flint, Michigan.  
 Thrust is the January 22, 1966 audience at Waterloo.

TABLE 2.--Age distribution in percentages within each group of respondents

Age Group	Audience				
	Prosc. 1	Prosc. 2	Prosc. 3	Prosc. 4	Thrust
Under 18	12.26	38.68	28.92	38.89	3.97
18-22	46.23	38.68	22.89	25.56	57.62
23-30	14.15	9.43	24.10	22.22	27.15
31-40	12.26	5.66	6.02	4.44	9.27
41-50	13.21	3.77	9.64	3.33	.66
51-60	1.89	2.83	4.82	4.44	1.32
over 60	-	.94	3.61	1.11	-

varied least in age, in that 57.62% of these respondents were between eighteen and twenty-two. But, the thrust respondents differed from the proscenium respondents in that only 3.97% of the thrust respondents were under eighteen while 29.69% of the proscenium respondents were under eighteen. The students age when entering the university undoubtedly contributed to this difference. Michigan university students enter a university a year earlier than Ontario students, for Ontario students continue through grade thirteen in their local high schools. Thus Michigan universities have younger students than Ontario universities.

#### Occupation

Although forty-nine specific occupations were listed by the respondents, thirty of these were listed only one time and nine more were listed only twice. The ten occupations identified by more than two people were: college student, high school student, college or university faculty, elementary or high school teacher, housewife, secretary, registered nurse, librarian, engineer and social worker. When the respondents' occupations were organized into broad occupational categories, the audiences showed a generally similar occupational makeup. See Table 3. There was one major discrepancy, however. Although the majority of the respondents from all audiences were students, the thrust stage respondents included very few high school students, only 3.4%; while high school students comprised 25.6% of the proscenium stage respondents. This difference in the percentage of high school respondents in each audience may have had an influence on the results

of the study, for the younger students seemed to empathize strongly with Hamlet in this production.

TABLE 3.--Percentage of each audience indicating membership in various occupational categories\*

Occupation	Audience				
	Prosc. 1	Prosc. 2	Prosc. 3	Prosc. 4	Thrust
College student	51.0	43.3	30.4	31.5	72.5
High school student	9.6	38.5	24.1	30.3	3.4
Nursery, Elementary or High School Teacher	9.6	4.8	12.6	16.8	7.4
University Faculty	4.9	2.9	3.8	0.0	3.4
Professional	14.9	8.9	10.1	7.7	4.63
Housewives	7.7	1.0	8.9	5.6	3.4
Blue and White Collar Workers (stenographers, meter readers, etc.)	2.9	1.0	10.4	7.7	4.63

\*Percentages here include only those audience members who reported occupations.

## Theatre Background

### Plays Seen

Most of the respondents had seen a number of theatrical performances. As can be seen from Table 4, the thrust audience members indicated that they saw an average of approximately 8.69 plays in a year, which was the highest mean number of plays seen by any audience. The Proscenium 3 and 4 audiences from Flint averaged the least number of performances attended per year. The Proscenium 1 respondents again differ most from the other proscenium respondents, in that they saw more plays on both kinds of stages per year than did the members of any other proscenium audience.

TABLE 4.--Mean number of plays seen in a year by the respondents in each audience

Theatre Attended	Audience				
	Prosc. 1	Prosc. 2	Prosc. 3	Prosc. 4	Thrust
Proscenium Theatre	6.33	4.98	4.59	4.84	3.99
Thrust Theatre	1.22	1.17	1.07	1.09	4.70
All Theatres	7.55	6.15	5.66	5.93	8.69

### Participation in Theatrical Productions

The portion of audience members who had actively participated in theatrical performances was lower than the proportion which might be considered active theatre goers. However, over 50% of all respondents had participated in theatre productions in some way. See Table 5 for

the percentage of respondents who had participated in the various activities related to the production of a play. Acting was the activity in which the largest percentage of the audience members had participated. The next most popular activities, in order, were working on crew, non-professional designing and non-professional directing. Very few respondents had been reimbursed for their theatrical activities. Acting was the activity for which the largest portion of the respondents, 3.76% of them, had been paid. Although a slightly smaller percentage of the thrust stage audience members had actively participated in theatre productions than had the proscenium stage audience members, the difference does not appear great enough to have influenced their response.

TABLE 5.--Percentage of respondents in each audience participating in activities related to play production

Activity	Audience				
	Prosc. 1	Prosc. 2	Prosc. 3	Prosc. 4	Thrust
Acted for fun	56.60	71.70	56.63	55.56	53.64
Worked on crew	48.11	58.49	40.49	45.56	41.06
Designed for fun	23.58	31.13	24.10	27.78	21.19
Directed for fun	16.04	13.21	13.25	13.33	17.88
Acted for pay	3.77	5.66	3.61	1.11	4.64
Designed for pay	3.77	2.83	4.82	-	-
Directed for pay	2.83	.94	3.61	1.11	2.65

### Participation in Formal Theatre Classes

Slightly more than 18% of the thrust, the Proscenium 3 and the Proscenium 4 audiences had formal classes in theatre, while more than 27% of both the Proscenium 1 and Proscenium 2 audiences had taken such classes. A very small percentage of the respondents, an average of 1.95% of the proscenium respondents and 2.65% of the thrust respondents, had taught formal classes in theatre. The exact percentages of each audience participating in formal theatre classes, as students and as teachers, are included in Table 6. It is possible that those respondents who had participated in formal theatre classes were more sophisticated in analyzing their reactions to a theatre performance.

TABLE 6.--Percentage of respondents in each audience participating in formal theatre classes

Activity	Audience				
	Prosc. 1	Prosc. 2	Prosc. 3	Prosc. 4	Thrust
Took formal classes	28.30	26.42	18.07	18.89	18.54
Taught formal classes	.94	.94	4.82	1.11	2.65

### Respondents' Stage Form Preference

The respondents were asked to indicate their preference in stage form. With the exception of the Proscenium 1 audience, the largest percentage in each theatre audience preferred the form of theatre they were in. See Table 7. The fact that audiences prefer the stage form of the theatre they are in reinforces the findings of earlier, more



informal surveys.<sup>1</sup> The survey of the Summer Circle Arena audience had indicated the 37% of that audience preferred arena theatre, 13.6% preferred proscenium theatre, while 48.3% indicated no preference. The Summer Circle Thrust Stage Audience Questionnaire indicated that 65% of those respondents preferred the thrust stage, 21% preferred the arena stage, while only 14% preferred the proscenium stage. There was no previous survey of stage form preference conducted in a proscenium theatre.

TABLE 7.--Stage form preferred by respondents expressed in percents of total respondents from each audience

Preference	Audience				
	Prosc. 1	Prosc. 2	Prosc. 3	Prosc. 4	Thrust
Proscenium stage	40.57	49.06	46.99	55.56	3.97
Thrust stage	41.51	37.74	37.35	28.89	91.39
No response	15.09	11.32	13.25	10.00	3.97
No preference	2.83	1.89	2.41	5.56	.66

Although audiences tend to like the form of theatre they are in, the non-proscenium stage seems to be the preferred stage form. Of the total respondents in this study, 47.38% indicated a preference for the thrust stage while 39.23% preferred the proscenium theatre. Familiarity with the thrust stage theatre apparently causes people to prefer this form. Only 3.97% of the thrust respondents indicated a preference for

<sup>1</sup>Gross, Steegstra and Long, "Summer Circle Audience Questionnaire" and Gross, "Thrust Stage Theatre Audience Survey."

the proscenium theatre, while 36.37% of the proscenium respondents indicated a preference for the thrust stage theatre.

#### Reasons for Preferring Particular Stage Form

In an open-ended question the respondents were asked why they preferred the stage form they did. Not all respondents were able to analyze the reasons for their preference; others, however, were able to give more than one definitive reason. Those who preferred the thrust stage appeared to have stronger, more definite reasons for preferring that form than did those who preferred the proscenium stage. Respondents preferring the thrust stage cited 38 reasons a total of 348 times to explain their preference. Only 25 reasons were cited a total of 176 times by respondents explaining why they preferred the proscenium stage.

The reason cited by the greatest number of respondents for preferring the thrust stage is that greater audience involvement and participation occurs in thrust stage theatres. This was also the major reason cited by many theatre critics and practitioners for preferring the thrust stage. The reason cited by the second greatest number of respondents for preferring the thrust stage is that in the thrust theatre they feel more a part of the action and of the performance. Thus there seems to be a strong concensus between thrust advocates and audience members who prefer thrust stages that this form of theatre aids in creating a different kind of involvement with the performance than that achieved in the proscenium theatre. Many of the reasons cited for preferring the thrust theatre emphasize its differences from the

proscenium. The belief that there is a closer contact between actor and audience was suggested in a number of ways: "Audience closer, thus greater visual and emotional contact;" "More intimate;" "Closer actor-audience relationship;" and "Breakdown of aesthetic distance." Eighty respondents used these or closely related phrasings to indicate their belief that the thrust differed from the proscenium in its degree of actor-audience contact. Forty-two respondents indicated they believed the action to be "more natural," "more believable," "less artificial" or "more lifelike." A reason for preferring the thrust stage seldom cited by the writers was cited by thirty-five audience members:

"Better visibility." A number of advantages of the thrust stage found in the literature were cited by smaller proportions of the respondents as reasons for preferring this stage form. These included: "More three-dimensional," which was cited by nine respondents; "Action and actors take on greater importance rather than set," which was cited by four people; "Audience uses imagination to fill in for scenery," which was cited by only three people; and "More a part of audience," which was cited by only two respondents. All the reasons cited for preferring the thrust stage are listed in Appendix III.

The reason most often cited for preferring the proscenium stage was "Better focus - actors face audience;" see Appendix III. This reason was cited by sixty respondents. Four respondents simply stated that the proscenium theatre offered "Better visibility." All other reasons cited for preferring the proscenium stage, with the exception of the fact that they had not seen a thrust stage performance, were cited a total of only fifty-eight times. Thus focus is definitely the major

reason audience members in the sample preferred the proscenium stage. Proscenium advocates, unlike these respondents, do not appear to offer any one reason for preferring the proscenium stage form. The reason cited by the second largest number of respondents, sixteen, for preferring the proscenium theatre was "familiarity." Other factors often mentioned by the critics and also cited by the respondents as reasons for preferring this stage form include: "Less aware of audience" cited by seven respondents, "Better establishment of aesthetic distance" cited by six respondents, "Setting more effective" cited by five respondents, "More believable - More lifelike - More natural" cited by four respondents, "More suited to most scripts" cited by four respondents, "Maintains sense of theatre - of stage identity" cited by two people, "Captures imagination more easily" cited by two people and "More illusionary" cited by only one respondent. The factors listed above, however, did not seem to be as strongly influential on the audience members' preference for the proscenium as the literature indicated. The production studied did not utilize the proscenium wall to establish aesthetic distance nor did it utilize "realistic" scenery. Therefore, the fact that greater establishment of aesthetic distance and greater possible illusion of reality were not cited by more respondents may relate to their response to this particular production. This would indicate that the style of the production has an important bearing upon the audience's response, a point which theorists too often overlook.

A number of respondents either failed to indicate a preference in stage form or indicated that they had no preference in stage form. See Appendix III. The major reason cited for the lack of response

or preference was that they had "Never seen a thrust stage performance." The other reason cited by nine people was that it depended upon the script and/or production. Three more respondents wanted variety and therefore like both forms. Although the primary concern is with stage form at this point in theatre history, a few theatre practitioners do agree with these respondents in suggesting that it is the production in relation to the stage form which determines the total impact.<sup>2</sup>

#### Influence of Stage Form on Audience Response

The major portion of the questionnaire consisted of scales. On thirty-nine of these scales the thrust and proscenium stage audiences' responses differed significantly at the .05 level when analyzed by the extension of the median test. These thirty-nine scales indicate the areas in which stage form influenced audience response in this study. The thrust and proscenium audiences' ratings of the contribution of selected factors on various facets of their aesthetic experience were ranked by median response. The resulting hierarchies also shed light on the influence of stage form on audience response. A detailed analysis of the influence of stage form on audience response follows.

#### Duration of Various Aesthetic Experiences

This researcher felt that it was of primary importance to determine if the aesthetic responses of the thrust and proscenium audience members truly differed. For this reason the questionnaire asked

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<sup>2</sup>Supra, pp. 41-44.

respondents to estimate the length of time during the performance they experienced some of the more common aesthetic reactions. The portion of the questionnaire which asked them to analyze the strength of their aesthetic experiences read:

For what portion of the performance did you experience each of the following:

Throughout								Not at
performance	___	___	___	___	___	___	___	all

To facilitate analysis numerical values were assigned to the blanks on each scale thus: 1 2 3 4 5 6 7.

#### Comparison of Scale Responses by Extension of Median Test

The results of the extension of the median tests comparing thrust and proscenium stage audiences' responses to these scales, as well as the median response of each audience, are included in Table 8.

There were no significant differences between thrust and proscenium audience members' ratings of the portion of the performance which they enjoyed as a "theatrical performance." These findings are contrary to ideas expressed in the literature.

Because the thrust stage theatre is thought to be more theatrical than the proscenium theatre the kinds of audience involvement are thought to differ. In an attempt to determine if this is true, two contrasting kinds of involvement were studied: emotional involvement and intellectual involvement. The thrust and proscenium stage audience members' responses indicate they experienced no significant differences in the length of time in which they were "emotionally" or "intellectually" involved in the performance.

TABLE 8.--Audience ratings: stage type by duration of aesthetic response

Aesthetic Response	Medians		Chi Square
	Thrust	Prosc.	
Emotional involvement in the production	3.56	3.15	2.97
Intellectual involvement in the production	2.81	2.76	.01
Imaginative participation in the production	3.71	3.20	11.80**
Enjoyment of production as theatrical performance	2.96	2.59	2.63
Enjoyment of production as "reality"	4.34	3.48	11.11**
Awareness of yourself as an audience member	5.18	5.45	3.96*
Complete involvement in the production	4.15	3.32	13.27**

\*Significantly different at the .05 level.

**\*\*Significantly different at the .01 level.**

Three questions were included in the questionnaire to analyze the extent of the audience members' emotional response in another way.

**The first question asked:**

If you identified with Hamlet during the performance what was the intensity of your identification?

Very intense \_\_\_\_\_ Very slight

The responses of the two audience groups to this question differed significantly. With a median response of 3.18 the proscenium audience indicated it identified more closely with Hamlet than did the thrust

audience, whose median response was 3.65. There was also a significant difference between the thrust and proscenium audience responses to the question which asked:

To what extent did you find yourself responding to the performance by assuming a position or muscular tension related to the activities on stage?

Throughout performance	Not at all
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Here, too, the proscenium audience rated itself as experiencing such responses throughout more of the performance than did the thrust audience. However, the medians of 3.71 and 4.55, respectively, indicate that neither audience felt they had responded in this way for the major portion of the performance. The audience members were then asked:

What was the intensity of these responses?

Very intense \_\_\_\_\_ Very slight

There was a significant difference between the responses of the two audiences on this scale. Although the medians, 3.73 and 4.38, indicate that neither audience believed its responses were extremely intense, the proscenium audience again had the lower median. The results on these scales indicate that the proscenium audience in this study was emotionally involved with the performance to a greater extent than was the thrust audience. Both proscenium and thrust stage advocates would accept this as true and desirable. Thrust advocates believe the audience should experience a new, although not precisely defined<sup>3</sup> form of involvement or communion with the performance rather than a purely

<sup>3</sup>Supra, pp. 37-41.



emotional reaction, while proscenium advocates desire an emotional response.

Although the estimates of the two audiences as to their "emotional" and "intellectual" involvement had not differed on the major scales in this series, their estimates of their "Complete involvement in the production" differed significantly. However, it was the proscenium stage audience, not the thrust audience, which rated itself as being completely involved in the production for a greater portion of the time. This is contrary to what the literature suggests, for as has been indicated, the thrust stage is lauded for creating a more total and complete form of involvement.

The literature suggests that one of the reasons thrust audience members are more involved in the performance than proscenium audience members is that the thrust form forces a greater imaginative participation upon them. The thrust and proscenium audience responses to the scale which asked them what portion of the performance they "Imaginatively participated in the production" differed significantly. However, it was the proscenium audience which rated itself as most imaginatively participating in the production.

Thrust advocates also suggest that the thrust audience members are more aware of themselves as audience members than are proscenium audience members. The findings of this study verified this idea. The two audiences' estimates of the duration of the performance that they were aware of themselves as audience members differed significantly. However, thrust advocates also believe that because of this awareness of the audience the thrust audience members are more aware of the

production as a theatrical performance and experience different, stronger forms of involvement with the performance than the proscenium audience members. These ideas were not borne out by the scales in this series. Thus awareness of other audience members was not as important a response as the literature suggests.

While the thrust stage is thought to foster a conscious awareness of theatricality within the observer, the proscenium stage is believed to aid in establishing an illusion of reality. The proscenium respondents in this study perceived the production as "reality" for a much larger portion of the performance than did the thrust respondents. The median proscenium response on the scale rating the duration of their "Enjoyment of the production as 'reality'" was 3.48, while the median thrust response was 4.34. Since the midpoint on the scale would be indicated by a median of 4.00, it can be seen that the "average" proscenium audience member felt he viewed the performance as "reality" for slightly more than half the time, while the "average" thrust audience member felt he viewed the performance as "reality" for slightly less than half the time.

No explanation was found for the surprising number of times the proscenium audience members rated themselves as experiencing the various responses for a greater portion of the performance than did the thrust audience members.

### Hierarchy Resulting from Ranking by Median Response

When the scales on which the audience members rated the perceived duration of their various aesthetic responses were ranked by median response, it was found that the resulting hierarchies for each audience were very similar. See Table 9. Only the aesthetic responses ranked first and second differed between the two audiences. The thrust audience indicated that the reaction it experienced for the greatest duration of the performance was its intellectual involvement and that the reaction it experienced for the second greatest duration of the performance was its enjoyment of the production of a theatrical performance. The proscenium audience reversed the ranking of these two responses. This similarity in ranking indicates that, although there may be a difference in the exact duration of the various responses in the thrust and proscenium theatre, there is no difference in the relative duration of each response.

### Two-Dimensional Versus Three-Dimensional

Although proscenium advocates disagree, thrust stage advocates believe that one important advantage of that stage form is its three-dimensionality in contrast to the proscenium stage's two-dimensionality. The audience's greater ability to perceive actors' movements up and down stage as well as across the stage is offered as one proof that the thrust stage is indeed more three-dimensional than is the proscenium.

TABLE 9.--Aesthetic responses ranked by the extent to which they were experienced by the thrust and proscenium audiences

Thrust		Proscenium	
Aesthetic Response	Median	Aesthetic Response	Median
1. Intellectual involvement in the production	2.81	1. Enjoyment of production as theatrical performance	2.59
2. Enjoyment of production as theatrical performance	2.96	2. Intellectual involvement in the production	2.76
3. Emotional involvement in the production	3.56	3. Emotional involvement in the production	3.15
4. Imaginative participation in the production	3.71	4. Imaginative participation in the production	3.20
5. Complete involvement in the production	4.15	5. Complete involvement in the production	3.32
6. Enjoyment of production as "reality"	4.34	6. Enjoyment of production as "reality"	3.48
7. Awareness of yourself as an audience member	5.18	7. Awareness of yourself as an audience member	5.45

A set of scales on the questionnaire asked the audience to rate their awareness of stage movement in different directions.<sup>4</sup> On these scales the proscenium audience was significantly more aware of the "Movement across the stage from left to right or right to left" than the thrust stage audience. The comparison of audience responses to the scale on which they rated their awareness of the "Movement from front to back or back to front of the stage" showed that they differed even more in their awareness of this kind of movement. But it was the thrust stage audience which was most aware of this movement. The medians of the audience responses on these two scales add to our understanding of the differences in their awareness of the direction of stage movement. When comparing the medians it can be seen that, although the thrust audience was more aware of movement from front to back than left to right, the difference between their medians on these two scales was only .30. The proscenium audience, by contrast, was far more aware of the movement left to right than front to back. The difference in their median responses on these two scales was 1.23. Thus the proscenium audience in this study rated itself as much more aware of the movement left and right than the movement into depth, while the thrust audience rated itself as being almost equally aware of all directions of movement. These findings seem to reinforce the belief

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<sup>4</sup> A third scale in this group asked the audience to rate their awareness of movement between the upper and lower stage platforms. This scale was eliminated from the analysis because the high platform used at the back of the proscenium stage had to be eliminated from the thrust stage setting since it created sightline problems on that stage. There was a tiny upstage platform on the thrust stage but this was hardly equable to the proscenium platform. See pictures of the sets on pages 49 and 50.

that a proscenium audience sees stage movement much more one dimensionally than does a thrust audience.

#### Audience Focus

Theatre practitioners are concerned with changes in audience focus resulting from differences in the physical relationship between actor and audience in thrust and proscenium theatres. Differences in audience focus are often cited as the basis for stage form preference. Most respondents of this study who preferred the proscenium theatre cited better focus as their reason for this preference.

#### Comparison of Scale Responses by Extension of Median Test

The two audiences in this study exhibited a number of differences in their perceived awareness of the various production elements. See Table 10.

The proscenium audience was more aware of the "Scenic or architectural background" than was the thrust audience. The proscenium audience was also significantly more aware of the "Total Stage Picture (Actors, Setting, Etc.)," than the thrust audience. The results of these scales indicate that in this study the proscenium audience perceived itself as focusing on the total stage picture, including the background, to a greater extent than did the thrust audience. Surprisingly, the proscenium audience also rated itself as being significantly more aware of the "Details in Setting and Properties" than did the thrust audience. It had been anticipated that while the proscenium

TABLE 10.--Audience ratings: stage type by awareness of production element

Element	Medians		Chi Square
	Thrust	Prosc.	
Costumes	2.43	2.24	2.19
Lighting	2.79	3.11	2.93
Scenic or architectural background	4.15	2.53	60.31**
Floor	5.59	4.21	17.22**
Properties (swords, furniture, etc.)	3.61	3.62	.003
Boots, jewelry, trim on costumes	3.52	3.28	.40
Details in setting and properties	4.94	4.30	7.94**
Audience	4.83	6.07	17.65**
Total stage picture (actors, setting, etc.)	2.89	2.53	6.52
Actors' group movement patterns	3.66	3.63	.02
Body position and movement of actors	2.94	2.71	1.87
Facial expressions of actors	2.76	2.62	.10
Activities of non-speaking actors	3.45	3.76	2.35
Actors' backs	3.97	4.21	.31

\*Significant at the .05 level.

\*\*Significant at the .01 level.

audience viewed the total, the thrust audience would be more aware of the details.

Since the thrust stage audience is seated at a diagonal above the stage looking down on it, it would be expected that they would be far more aware of the stage floor than would a proscenium audience. This was not found to be true, given the conditions of this study. A comparison of the medians, 4.21 for the proscenium audience and 5.59 for the thrust audience, indicates that the proscenium respondents were significantly more aware of the floor than the thrust stage respondents. This can perhaps be explained by the special circumstances of this study. The setting used on the proscenium stages included a large central raked platform, which was eliminated from the thrust stage theatre setting.<sup>5</sup> Thus the proscenium audience, which is not ordinarily accustomed to seeing the stage floor, was undoubtedly especially aware of the floor during this production; while the thrust audience was no more aware of seeing the floor during this performance than it was during any other performance in the same thrust stage theatre. The results obtained here would indicate that the normal influence of stage form can be modified by the design of the setting.

No significant differences were exhibited between the two audiences' responses on scales checking their awareness of other technical elements: "Costumes," "Costume details," "Lighting," or "Properties."

There were also no significant differences between the audiences' responses on scales rating their perceived awareness of the "Actors'

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<sup>5</sup>See illustrations, pages 49 and 50.



group movement patterns," "Body position and movement of actors," "Facial expressions of actors," "Actors' backs," or of the "Activities of non-speaking actors." Since the thrust stage is thought to emphasize the actor far more than does the proscenium stage, these findings were unexpected. Because it had been anticipated that there would be a difference in the thrust and proscenium audiences' awareness of the "Actors' backs" the next question was concerned with the effect of their awareness of actors' backs.

What effect did your awareness of the actors' backs have on your enjoyment of tonight's performance?

Enhanced		Distracted from
enjoyment	___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___	enjoyment

The responses on this scale did differ significantly. Although there had been no significant difference in the two audiences' awareness of actors' backs, the proscenium stage audience felt that their awareness of actors' backs had enhanced their enjoyment of the production, while the thrust stage audience rated their awareness of actors' backs as having a more neutral or negative influence on their enjoyment of the performance. In this particular production, the director had blocked Hamlet facing upstage in the opening court scene and the players' scene. Apparently this planned, unusual presentation of the actor's back to the proscenium audience had a greater influence on the audience members' enjoyment of the performance than did the continued, almost accidental views the thrust stage audience members had of actors' backs. However, the medians for both scales, proscenium 4.18 and thrust 4.58, indicate that neither audience's enjoyment was greatly enhanced by viewing the actor's back.

Predictably, the thrust stage respondents were significantly more aware of the audience than the proscenium respondents. The median response of 6.07 indicates the proscenium audience members were relatively unaware of the other audience members, for median responses of 5 or 6 are very unusual in this study. On the last page of the questionnaire the respondents were again asked about their awareness of the audience:

When viewing the performance did you focus completely on the stage or were you also aware of the surrounding audience?

Oblivious to audience	Aware of audience
<p>1. <i>My first novel was a failure. I had no idea what I was doing.</i></p> <p>2. <i>I was a terrible writer. I had no idea what I was doing.</i></p> <p>3. <i>I was a terrible writer. I had no idea what I was doing.</i></p> <p>4. <i>I was a terrible writer. I had no idea what I was doing.</i></p> <p>5. <i>I was a terrible writer. I had no idea what I was doing.</i></p> <p>6. <i>I was a terrible writer. I had no idea what I was doing.</i></p> <p>7. <i>I was a terrible writer. I had no idea what I was doing.</i></p> <p>8. <i>I was a terrible writer. I had no idea what I was doing.</i></p> <p>9. <i>I was a terrible writer. I had no idea what I was doing.</i></p> <p>10. <i>I was a terrible writer. I had no idea what I was doing.</i></p>	<p>1. <i>My first novel was a failure. I had no idea what I was doing.</i></p> <p>2. <i>I was a terrible writer. I had no idea what I was doing.</i></p> <p>3. <i>I was a terrible writer. I had no idea what I was doing.</i></p> <p>4. <i>I was a terrible writer. I had no idea what I was doing.</i></p> <p>5. <i>I was a terrible writer. I had no idea what I was doing.</i></p> <p>6. <i>I was a terrible writer. I had no idea what I was doing.</i></p> <p>7. <i>I was a terrible writer. I had no idea what I was doing.</i></p> <p>8. <i>I was a terrible writer. I had no idea what I was doing.</i></p> <p>9. <i>I was a terrible writer. I had no idea what I was doing.</i></p> <p>10. <i>I was a terrible writer. I had no idea what I was doing.</i></p>

Again the responses to this scale were significantly different. With a median response on this scale of 3.67, the thrust respondents were more aware of the audience than the proscenium stage respondents, whose median response was 2.69. However, the medians suggest that awareness of other audience members was not very extensive in either theatre form. Since these were scales to which every respondent reacted, the audience members must have felt very positive about the extent of their awareness of their fellow audience members. These findings support the ideas presented in the literature. One of the major advantages of the proscenium stage cited by proscenium advocates is its specific focus on the stage. By contrast, the thrust stage audience members' awareness of other audience members and of themselves as a part of the audience is thought by thrust advocates to be a great advantage of that stage form.

### Hierarchy Resulting from Ranking by Median Response

When the two audiences' ratings of their awareness of the various production elements were ranked by their median responses, differences in the resulting hierarchies were obvious. See Table 11. These rankings generally support the ideas concerning differing audience focuses in thrust and proscenium stage theatres.

Costumes were the production factor ranked as the primary point of their focus by both thrust and proscenium stage audiences. This would indicate that costumes need to be given careful attention in both thrust and proscenium stage theatres.

The thrust audience ranked the "Facial expressions of actors" as the production factor second in importance; while the proscenium audience ranked both "Scenic or architectural background," and "Total stage picture (actors, setting, etc.);" equally and both as second in importance. Thus the theory that the thrust stage causes the audience to focus on the actor while the proscenium stage creates a focus on the total framed stage picture is reinforced by the rankings of the audience responses in this study.

The thrust audience gave "Lighting" great importance, ranking it in third place. The literature suggested that lighting substituted for the setting on the thrust stage. The thrust respondents in this study were certainly far more aware of lighting than of the setting, for they ranked "Scenic or architectural background" in eleventh place. They did rank the "Total stage picture (actors, setting, etc.)," which

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TABLE 11.--Production elements ranked by the extent to which they were observed by thrust and proscenium audiences

Thrust		Proscenium	
Production Element	Median	Production Element	Median
1. Costumes	2.43	1. Costumes	2.24
2. Facial expression of actors	2.76	2. Scenic or architectural background	2.53
3. Lighting	2.79	3. Total stage picture (actors, setting, etc.)	2.53
4. Total stage picture (actors, setting, etc.)	2.89	4. Facial expression of actors	2.62
5. Body position and movement of actors	2.94	5. Body position and movement of actors	2.71
6. Activities of non-speaking actors	3.45	6. Lighting	3.11

7. Boots, jewelry, trim on costumes	3.52	7. Boots, jewelry, trim on costumes	3.28
8. Properties (swords, furniture, etc.)	3.61	8. Properties (swords, furniture, etc.)	3.62
9. Actors' group movement patterns	3.66	9. Actors' group movement patterns	3.63
10. Actors' backs	3.97	10. Activities of non-speaking actors	3.76
11. Scenic or architectural background	4.15	11. Actors' backs	4.21
12. Audience	4.83	12. Floor	4.21
13. Details in setting and properties	4.94	13. Details in setting and properties	4.30
14. Floor	5.59	14. Audience	6.07

was tied for second in importance in the proscenium theatre, in fourth place.

There were significant differences in the way the two audiences rated awareness of the three factors which ranked at the bottom of both hierarchies: "Floor," "Audience" and "Details in setting and properties." Although in thirteenth place in both hierarchies, "Details in setting and properties" was rated, according to their median responses and analysis by the extension of the median test, as being in greater focus on the proscenium than on the thrust stage. The thrust audience was less aware of the floor than of any other factor, while the proscenium audience was less aware of the audience than of any other factor.

#### Illusion and Anti-Illusion

The proscenium theatre is often called the theatre of illusion, while the thrust theatre is considered the theatre of anti-illusion.<sup>6</sup> Writers credit various factors inherent in the proscenium theatre with enhancing its illusionary qualities. They also credit differing factors inherent in the thrust theatre with emphasizing a production's theatricality.<sup>7</sup> The following sections report the findings of this study relative to the influence of selected factors on the creation of an illusion of reality and on the audience members' awareness of a performance's theatricality in the thrust and proscenium theatres.

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<sup>6</sup>Supra, p. 25.

<sup>7</sup>Supra, pp. 26-27.

## Factors Contributing Toward Creation of Illusion of Reality

As has been stated, the proscenium respondents perceived the activities on stage as "Reality" for a greater duration of the performance than did the thrust respondents.<sup>8</sup> The next question to be answered concerning the creation of the illusion of reality in the thrust and proscenium theatres is, "What production factors contribute toward the creation of this illusion on each stage form?"

Comparison of scale responses by extension of median test.--Thrust and proscenium stage audience members' perception of the contribution of various factors toward "the creation of the illusion of reality on stage" differed significantly on eight of the nine scales included in this group. See Table 12. The only scale item which both audiences rated in similar ways was "Facial expressions and mannerisms of actors." This, then, was the only factor, given the conditions of this study, which had no significantly different effect on the creation of the illusion of reality in the thrust or proscenium theatre.

It has often been suggested that one of the great benefits of the thrust stage theatre is the lack of separation between actor and audience. The advantages of this lack of separation are not always explained. In this study the "Feeling of closeness to actors and stage" was rated by the thrust audience as making a far greater contribution toward the creation of the illusion of reality on stage than it was by the proscenium audience.

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<sup>8</sup>Supra, p. 80.

TABLE 12.--Audience ratings: stage types by factors' contributions toward creation of illusion of reality

Factor	Medians		Chi Square
	Thrust	Proscenium	
Acting	2.17	1.85	8.32**
Facial expressions and mannerisms of actors	2.51	2.29	2.04
Scenic or architectural background	5.19	3.38	63.44**
Details in setting and properties	4.87	4.01	10.75**
Costuming	3.24	2.64	13.87**
Boots, jewelry, trim on costumes	4.06	3.46	4.84*
Feeling of closeness to actors and stage	2.49	2.88	13.54**
Feeling of separation from actors and stage	6.56	6.05	3.99*
Your imaginative augmentation of setting	4.15	3.55	6.04*

\*Significant at .05 level.

\*\*Significant at .01 level.

The proscenium audience median responses were lower than the thrust audience median responses on all other scales in this group. Thus the proscenium audience rated all of the other factors as making a greater contribution toward the creation of the illusion of reality on stage than did the thrust audience.

There was a significant difference between the two audiences' ratings of the influence of "Scenic or architectural background" on the



creation of the illusion of reality. There had also been a significant difference in the two audiences' ratings of their awareness of the scenic or architectural background.<sup>9</sup> Thus, the proscenium audience was not only more aware of the background than the thrust audience, but it perceived this background as having a far greater influence on the creation of the illusion of reality. These findings support the ideas of writers who claim that the proscenium stage setting creates a far greater illusion of reality than does the thrust stage setting. Since all settings in this study were similar and non-realistic, such features of the proscenium theatres as the proscenium frame and the frontal view of the setting must have aided in giving the proscenium stage settings a greater essence of reality than the setting achieved on the thrust stage.

It is thought that the role of the setting in creating an illusion of reality on the proscenium stage is taken over by the costumes and properties on the thrust stage. In the present study this was not found to be true. Rather, "Details in setting and properties," "Costuming," and "Boots, jewelry, trim on costumes," were all rated as making a greater contribution toward the creation of the illusion of reality on stage by the proscenium audience than by the thrust audience.

Acting, too, is thought to take on greater importance in the thrust stage theatre, where it will provide a true "theatrical" reality. In this study the proscenium respondents rated acting as making a greater contribution toward the creation of the illusion of reality on stage than did the thrust respondents.

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<sup>9</sup>Supra, p. 84.

The "Feeling of separation from actors and stage" was credited with contributing more toward the creation of the illusion of reality by the proscenium than the thrust respondents. This is predicted by the writers. However, it should be noted that the median response of the proscenium audience to this scale was only 6.05, indicating that their feeling of separation from actors and stage was making only a minimum contribution toward the creation of the illusion of reality.

The literature suggests that the thrust stage audience's greater imaginative involvement in the performance would aid in producing a very effective form of illusion. However, the proscenium audience also rated "Your imaginative augmentation of setting" as making a greater contribution toward the creation of the illusion of reality than did the thrust audience.

As has been stated, the proscenium respondents credited seven of the nine scale items with making greater contributions toward the creation of the illusion of reality on stage than did the thrust respondents. The proscenium respondents had also rated themselves as viewing the production as reality for a far greater portion of the performance than did the thrust respondents.

Hierarchy resulting from ranking by median response.--The factors which the respondents had rated as to their "Contribution toward the creation of the illusion of reality on stage" were ranked by median response of each audience. Two different hierarchies resulted, indicating that the thrust and proscenium audiences perceived these factors as being of different degrees of importance in the creation of the illusion of reality. See Table 13.

TABLE 13.--Ranking of factors contributing toward the thrust and proscenium audiences' awareness of production as "reality"

Thrust		Proscenium	
Factor	Median	Factor	Median
1. Acting	2.17	1. Acting	1.85
2. Feeling of closeness to actors and stage	2.49	2. Expressions and mannerisms of actors	2.29
3. Expressions and mannerisms of actors	2.51	3. Costuming	2.64
4. Costuming	3.24	4. Feeling of closeness to actors and stage	2.88
5. Boots, jewelry, trim on costumes	4.06	5. Scenic or architectural background	3.38
6. Imaginative augmentation of setting	4.15	6. Boots, jewelry, trim on costume	3.46
7. Details in setting and properties	4.87	7. Imaginative augmentation of setting	3.55
8. Scenic or architectural background	5.19	8. Details in setting and properties	4.01
9. Feeling of separation from actors and stage	6.56	9. Feeling of separation from actors and stage	6.05

Both audiences did rank acting as being of primary importance in the creation of the illusion of reality. There was, however, a significant difference in the responses of the two audiences to this scale.<sup>10</sup> The audiences' median responses indicate that the proscenium audience rated acting as being of even greater importance than did the thrust audience; the median response for the proscenium audience being 1.85, while that for the thrust audience was 2.17.

Both audiences rated their "Feeling of separation from actors and stage" as being of least importance in the creation of the illusion of reality. Again, however, there was a significant difference in their response.<sup>11</sup> The thrust audience rated this feeling as having even less influence on creating an illusion of reality than did the proscenium audience. It is thought that the separation created by the proscenium frame is of great importance in the creation of an illusion of reality on the proscenium stage. With medians of 6.08 and 6.56, both proscenium and thrust audiences rated their feeling of separation as being unimportant in the creation of the illusion of reality.

Other than the two factors discussed above, the hierarchies of the thrust and proscenium audiences differed completely. As might be expected, the thrust audience rated its "Feeling of closeness to the actors and stage" as second in importance in the creation of the illusion of reality on stage. The proscenium respondents rated this as fourth in importance. The proscenium respondents continued to stress the actor by rating "Expressions and mannerisms of actors" as of second in

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<sup>10</sup>Supra, p. 95.

<sup>11</sup>Supra, p. 96.

importance in the creation of the illusion of reality. The thrust audience rated this as third in importance.

Contrary to what most theatre practitioners might predict, "Costuming" ranked above "Scenic or architectural background" in both thrust and proscenium hierarchies. The proscenium respondents ranked both costumes and setting as being more important in the creation of the illusion of reality than did the thrust respondents. The thrust respondents, in contrast, credited the details in costumes, setting and properties with having greater influence on the creation of the illusion of reality than did the proscenium respondents. The greater importance of the total costume and setting in the proscenium theatre and on the details of costumes, setting and properties in the thrust theatre relates to ideas in the literature.

Their "Imaginative augmentation of setting" was not rated as being particularly important in the creation of the illusion of reality by either thrust or proscenium respondents. The thrust respondents rated this as sixth in importance, while the proscenium respondents placed it seventh on the hierarchy.

#### Factors Contributing Toward Theatricality

Theatre audience members do not always perceive the production they are watching to be "Reality"; rather, they are often aware that it is a theatrical performance. In this study there was no significant difference in the duration of the performance during which each audience perceived it as a theatrical performance. A special series of scales was included in the questionnaire in an effort to determine the

influence of stage form on the contribution of various factors in reminding the audience members that they are watching a theatrical performance.

Comparison of scales by extension of median test.--No significant difference was found between the thrust and proscenium audiences' responses to half of these scales. See Table 14. Thus the "Acting," the "Scenic or architectural background," the "Costuming" and the "Feeling of separation from the actors and stage" were not found to make significantly different contributions toward reminding the audience members that they were watching a theatrical performance in thrust and proscenium theatres.

As the literature had suggested, the thrust stage audience members' awareness of the surrounding audience made a greater contribution toward reminding them that they were watching a theatrical performance than did the proscenium audience members' awareness of their fellow audience members.

The proscenium respondents, by contrast, rated their awareness of the floor as making a greater contribution toward reminding them that they were watching a theatrical performance than did the thrust audience. The proscenium audience had also been more aware of the floor than had the thrust audience. The results of this study would indicate that it is not stage form, but rather emphasis upon the stage floor by any means, that results in the floor aiding in the creation of a more theatrical presentation.

The proscenium audience members also rated their "Feeling of closeness to actors and stage" as making a significantly greater

contribution toward reminding them that they were watching a theatrical performance than did the thrust audience members. Since the proscenium audience members expect to be separate from the stage, a feeling of closeness to it would at times remind them that they were in a theatre.

TABLE 14.--Audience ratings: stage types by factors' contributions toward creation of theatricality

Factor	Medians		Chi Square
	Thrust	Proscenium	
Acting	3.18	2.72	1.42
Scenic or architectural background	3.07	2.85	1.25
Costuming	3.64	2.96	3.15
Awareness of floor	5.30	4.18	11.34**
Awareness of audience	3.81	4.83	10.36**
Feeling of closeness to actors and stage	4.97	4.22	6.09*
Feeling of separation from actors and stage	4.94	4.88	.03
Your imaginative augmentation of setting	4.70	4.11	4.95*

\*Significant at the .05 level.

\*\*Significant at the .01 level.

The third factor which the proscenium audience members credited with having more influence on reminding them that they were watching a theatrical performance than did the thrust audience members was "Your imaginative augmentation of the setting." This finding was contrary to expectation. Thrust stage advocates suggest that thrust audience

members become both more involved in the production and are at the same time constantly reminded that they are watching a theatrical performance because of their imaginative augmentation of the setting. It is interesting to note that in this study the proscenium audience members' imaginative augmentation of the setting contributed more to their perception of the production as reality and as a theatrical performance than it did to the thrust audience members. They had also been imaginatively involved in the production for a longer time. These findings suggest that the audience members' imaginative augmentation of the setting produces these responses in any theatre form. It is possible that the degree of imaginative augmentation of the setting determines the extent of its influence on other aesthetic responses.

Hierarchy resulting from ranking by median response.--When the scale items contributing toward reminding the audience members that they were watching a theatrical performance were ranked by median audience response, the resulting hierarchies for thrust and proscenium audiences differed. See Table 15. The medians indicate, however, that no factors were rated as making exceptionally strong contributions toward reminding the respondents that they were watching a theatrical performance.

The thrust audience members rated "Scenic or architectural background" as the most important factor in reminding them that they were watching a theatrical performance. They rated their "Awareness of audience" as fourth in importance in creating this aesthetic response. Both of these factors are suggested as important in creating the anti-illusion present in a thrust stage theatre.



TABLE 15.--Ranking of factors contributing toward the thrust and the proscenium audiences' awareness of production as theatrical performance

Thrust		Proscenium	
Factor	Median	Factor	Median
1. Scenic or architectural background	3.07	1. Acting	2.72
2. Acting	3.18	2. Scenic or architectural background	2.85
3. Costuming	3.64	3. Costuming	2.96
4. Awareness of audience	3.81	4. Imaginative augmentation of setting	4.11
5. Imaginative augmentation of setting	4.70	5. Awareness of floor	4.18
6. Feeling of separation from actors and stage	4.94	6. Feeling of closeness to actors and stage	4.22
7. Feeling of closeness to actors and stage	4.97	7. Awareness of audience	4.83
8. Awareness of floor	5.30	8. Feeling of separation from actors and stage	4.88

The proscenium respondents rated "Scenic or architectural background" as the second greatest contributor toward reminding them that they were watching a theatrical performance. Since the setting is thought to be important in creating an illusion of reality in a proscenium theatre, this finding is contrary to that suggested by the literature. This is another instance where the style of the setting had a greater influence on audience response than stage form.

Acting, which had been rated as the factor which contributed the most toward the creation of the illusion of reality on stage by both audiences, was rated as the factor contributing the most toward reminding them that they were watching a theatrical performance by the proscenium audience members and the factor making the second greatest contribution toward this by the thrust stage audience members. Although this seems to be a paradox, it is not. Acting, depending upon whether it is representational or presentational, can intentionally be utilized to create an illusion of reality or to remind the viewer that he is in a theatre. The style of acting was varied during this production to emphasize the meaning of specific scenes. Unfortunately, it is also true that in any production there are moments of uninspired acting which quickly remind the audience members that they are watching something artificial.

Costuming was rated as the third most important contributing factor in reminding them that they were watching a theatrical performance by the members of both audience groups. Costumes, the production element of which both audiences were most aware, apparently had a strong influence on their aesthetic responses, for costuming has also been

rated as relatively important in the creation of the illusion of reality on stage. This emphasis on costuming was unexpected, for costumes are not generally credited with contributing quite so much to the ultimate success of a production.

Since the remaining factors in this hierarchy have medians of four or higher, these factors were apparently much less important in reminding the audience members that they are watching a theatrical performance than were those discussed above. Three additional factors ranked higher in the proscenium hierarchy than in the thrust hierarchy. These were "Imaginative augmentation of setting," "Awareness of floor," and "Feeling of closeness to actors and stage." The fact that the responses to these scales differed from expectation has already been discussed. As the literature had suggested, "Awareness of audience" was ranked as much more important in the thrust than the proscenium theatre in reminding the audience member that he was watching a theatrical performance. Their "Feeling of separation from actors and stage" ranked in sixth place in the thrust hierarchy and in eighth place in the proscenium hierarchy. However, both audiences' median responses to this factor were similar; the thrust median was 4.94, while the proscenium median was 4.88. It is interesting to note that the proscenium audience members ranked their "Feeling of closeness to actors and stage" as being more important than their "Feeling of separation from actors and stage" in reminding them that they were watching a theatrical performance, while the thrust audience reversed the order of these responses. As has been stated, none of these factors was rated as being highly

significant in reminding the audience member that he was watching a theatrical performance.

#### Involvement and Detachment

The greatest difference between thrust and proscenium theatres is the difference in the physical relationship between the audience and the actors that is formed by the stage architecture. In the proscenium theatre the audience is seated before the performers, separated from them by the proscenium arch; while in the thrust stage theatre the audience and performers are not separated by any physical barrier. Both thrust and proscenium advocates believe that these differences strongly influence the audience's feeling about its relationship with the performance. They suggest that the thrust audience feels itself an integral part of the performance, while the proscenium audience feels itself to be a separate entity from the performance. The feeling of being an integral part of the performance is thought to create a strong sense of involvement with the performance in the thrust audience members. It is because they believe this sense of involvement is created in the thrust stage theatre that many theorists prefer this form. Respondents in this study indicated that "Greater audience involvement and participation," the "Feeling of being a part of the performance," the "Greater visual and emotional contact" and the "Closer actor-audience relationship" were important reasons for preferring the thrust stage. Proscenium advocates, in contrast, believe a sense of detachment from the performance is necessary for complete enjoyment of a production and prefer the proscenium form because they believe it

aids in creating this sense of detachment or separation from the performance.

Surprisingly, the thrust and proscenium stage respondents in this study exhibited no significant difference in their responses to the question:

Did you feel that you were an integral part of the performance or did you view the performance as being an entity separate from yourself?

Integral part of performance	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	Separate from performance
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The proscenium audience median of 4.01 and the thrust audience median of 3.95 indicate that both audiences perceived themselves at a midpoint between the two extremes on the scale. The results on this scale, then, were completely contrary to what the literature suggested. There was a significant difference, however, in the duration of the performance during which the two audiences were "Completely involved in the production." The proscenium respondents indicated that they were "Completely involved in the performance" for a greater portion of the production than the thrust respondents. This, too, was unexpected and contrary to the ideas presented in the literature.

Although thrust advocates believe that thrust audience members are more involved in the performance than are proscenium audience members, specific differences in involvement are never completely clarified. The thrust audience members are credited with being more imaginatively involved in the performance because of their need to augment the relatively non-illusionistic thrust stage setting. Beyond this, thrust advocates simply laud the thrust stage form for creating a strong, voluntary form of involvement. Lack of separation between

actor and audience and the audience members' awareness of other audience members are suggested as reasons for this involvement.

Proscenium advocates, in contrast, believe the separation between actor and audience enhances the audience members' enjoyment of the performance. Their separation from the performance and unawareness of other audience members are thought to foster in them a detached, unprejudiced frame of mind which allows them unconsciously, yet sympathetically, to view persons and events they would not want to confront in daily life. Their emotional response is thought to be heightened and their rational judgment suspended.

Three kinds of involvement: imaginative involvement, emotional involvement and intellectual involvement, were studied as a means of identifying and analyzing (1) the types of audience involvement with or detachment from the performance, (2) the factors which create the specific kinds of involvement, and (3) the effect of this involvement on the total aesthetic experience. Imaginative involvement was included because it was emphasized in the literature. Emotional and intellectual involvement were selected to be studied because this researcher believed they were identifiable aesthetic responses which best represented the difference between the voluntary, rational involvement and the involuntary, emotional involvement vaguely defined and loudly exalted by thrust and proscenium proponents respectively. It was also felt, and the pretest verified this belief, that the respondents would be able to distinguish between their emotional and intellectual responses, thus making it unnecessary to provide them with complex definitions of terms.

### Audience Imaginative Involvement

Advocates of both the thrust and proscenium stage forms agree that the proscenium theatre is more illusionistic than the thrust stage theatre. The findings of this study relative to the duration of the performance during which the audience members perceived it as "Reality" corroborate this belief. Proscenium advocates offer this as an advantage of the proscenium, for they like illusion. Thrust advocates, in contrast, believe that the inability to create a totally illusionistic picture on that stage form is an advantage of the thrust stage. They believe that the lack of a detailed setting forces the audience members to imagine more of the setting and thereby aids in involving them in the performance. However, the reader may recall that the proscenium respondents in this study indicated that they were "Imaginatively" participating in the production for a greater portion of the performance than the thrust respondents. But, this was not specifically identified as imaginative augmentation of the setting.

Although the proscenium stage setting utilized in this study had a special background, while the thrust setting utilized the architectural facade of the Arts Theatre, neither the thrust nor proscenium settings was realistic. It is believed that thrust stage audience members become more personally and satisfactorily involved in the performance than do proscenium audience members because they are stimulated to complete the settings. Three questions were included on the questionnaire to determine if this was true under the special conditions of this study. The respondents were first asked:

To what extent did you imagine complete settings for the various scenes?

Mentally "saw" very complete settings	_____	Saw settings just as they were presented
--	-------	--

Surprisingly, the proscenium audience members rated themselves as mentally seeing more complete settings than did the thrust audience members. This seems to indicate that the observers are stimulated to imagine more complete settings, not only because of the stage form but also because of the design of the setting itself. However, it is obvious that in many instances the thrust stage could not have as complete a setting as would be possible on a proscenium stage. With median responses of 3.38 and 4.12, neither audience rated itself as imagining extremely complete settings. Respondents were next asked:

What effect do you believe the addition of more varied, detailed, realistic scenery and properties would have had on your enjoyment of the play?

Would have enjoyed it much more	_____	Would have enjoyed it far less
---------------------------------------	-------	--------------------------------------

There was no significant difference in the responses of the two audience groups to this question. The median responses to this question, 5.25 for the thrust audience and 5.09 for the proscenium audience, indicate that although neither audience imagined very complete settings both audience groups believed that the addition of more varied, detailed, realistic scenery would in no way have enhanced their enjoyment of the performance. Rather, they felt it might have had a slightly negative effect on their enjoyment. Perhaps this is clarified by an analysis of the responses to the final question in this group:



Did you find that to imaginatively add to the setting (augment the setting) involved you in the performance or did you find that the necessity for imaginatively augmenting the setting was distracting?

Involved me in		Distracted me
the performance	___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___	from performance

Again there was no significant difference between the responses of the two groups to this question. However, the median responses to this question, 3.36 for the thrust group and 3.05 for the proscenium group, indicate that both groups felt that what imaginative augmentation of the setting they did was a positive experience which involved them in the performance. Thus the theory which suggests that the audience members' involvement in a production is enhanced by their imaginative augmentation of the setting is verified by the findings of this study. However, it is possible that in this study it was not the stage form, but the design of the setting itself, which was responsible for the audience members' imaginative augmentation of the set.

#### Factors Contributing Toward Emotional Involvement

The response of which the theatre goer is often most readily aware is his emotional response. In this study the thrust and proscenium respondents had indicated no significant difference in the perceived duration of their emotional involvement with the performance. However, the proscenium audience rated itself as experiencing stronger identification with Hamlet and more extensive and intense involuntary muscular responses. In order to determine if the factors contributing toward the creation of their emotional responses differed in the thrust

and proscenium theatres, a special series of scales was included on the questionnaire.

Comparison of scales by extension of median test.--Although no significant difference had been found between the portions of the performance each audience felt emotionally involved in the production, significant differences were found in the contribution of six factors toward the two audiences' emotional involvement. See Table 16. Median responses on each of these scales indicate that the proscenium audience in all instances believed the factors studied made greater contributions toward its emotional involvement than did the thrust audience. The six scales on which the two audiences' responses differed significantly were: "Actors interpretation," "Action portrayed on stage," "Emotion portrayed on stage," "Feeling of separation from actors," "Illusion of reality created," and "Imaginative augmentation of setting." A comparison of the two groups' responses on the other scales in this series indicates that there was no significant difference in their evaluation of the contribution of their "Identification with specific characters," their "Sympathy for specific characters," or their feeling of "Closeness to the actors" toward their emotional involvement in the performance.

As has been stated, thrust advocates suggest that stronger audience involvement with the performance is created in a thrust theatre than in a proscenium theatre. However, the precise nature of this involvement is not defined. In this study, no stronger emotional involvement was found in the thrust theatre than in the proscenium theatre. Nor were any factors identified which contributed more toward

the audience members' emotional involvement in the thrust than in the proscenium theatre.

TABLE 16.--Audience ratings: stage types by factors' contributions toward emotional involvement

Factor	Medians		Chi Square
	Thrust	Proscenium	
Actor's interpretation	2.51	1.98	7.27**
Action portrayed on stage	3.06	2.56	14.50**
Emotion portrayed on stage	2.19	1.93	4.13*
Your identification with specific character	2.86	2.68	.55
Your sympathy for specific characters	2.64	2.31	1.33
Your feeling of closeness to actors	3.16	3.14	.27
Your feeling of separation from actors	6.45	5.62	15.87**
Illusion of reality created	3.88	2.82	18.40**
Your imaginative augmentation of setting	4.55	3.70	10.23**

\*Significant at the .05 level.

\*\*Significant at the .01 level.

Proscenium advocates, by contrast, desire an emotional response as a part of the aesthetic experience. This desired emotional response is, however, thought to be a detached and impersonal response. Such factors as the separation of actor and audience and the illusion of reality created in this theatre form are identified as contributors

toward the audience members' emotional response. The findings of this study support these ideas. The proscenium respondents in this study attributed their "Imaginative augmentation of the setting" with making a greater contribution toward their emotional involvement than did the thrust respondents. Although this was not anticipated, it parallels another finding of this study: the proscenium audience had "Imaginatively augmented the setting" to a greater extent than had the thrust audience. Three factors seemingly related more to script and style than to stage form, "Actor's interpretation," "Action portrayed on stage" and "Emotion portrayed on stage," were also attributed with greater power to induce an emotional response by the proscenium audience than by the thrust audience. Again this was unexpected.

Hierarchy resulting from ranking by median response.--Although the proscenium respondents had rated the contribution of six factors toward their emotional response significantly higher on the scales than had the thrust audience, the hierarchies of factors generated through ranking the factors by median response of each audience were similar. See Table 17. Thus both audiences indicated that they believed the "Emotion portrayed on stage," the "Actor's interpretation," and their "Sympathy for specific characters" were, in that order, the three factors most responsible for their emotional involvement with the performance. Both audiences also indicated that their "Imaginative augmentation of the setting" and their "Feeling of separation from the actors" were, in that order, the two factors least responsible for their emotional involvement. Only the factors in the central portion of the hierarchy differ in ordering. Thus the thrust audience ranked

TABLE 17.--Ranking of factors contributing toward the thrust and the proscenium audiences' emotional involvement

Thrust		Proscenium	
Factor	Median	Factor	Median
1. Emotion portrayed on stage	2.19	1. Emotion portrayed on stage	1.93
2. Actor's interpretation	2.51	2. Actor's interpretation	1.98
3. Sympathy for specific characters	2.64	3. Sympathy for specific characters	2.31
4. Identification with specific characters	2.86	4. Action portrayed on stage	2.56
5. Action portrayed on stage	3.06	5. Identification with specific characters	2.68
6. Feeling of closeness to actors	3.16	6. Illusion of reality created	2.82
7. Illusion of reality created	3.88	7. Feeling of closeness to actors	3.14
8. Imaginative augmentation of setting	4.55	8. Imaginative augmentation of setting	3.70
9. Feeling of separation from actors	6.45	9. Feeling of separation from actors	5.62

"Identification with specific characters" in fourth place and "Action portrayed on stage" in fifth place, while the proscenium respondents ranked these two factors in the reverse order. The higher ranking of "Identification with specific characters" by the thrust audience is interesting to note, in light of the fact that the proscenium audience had identified more strongly with at least one character, Hamlet. Apparently the degree of identification and the effect of such identification on emotional response are not directly related. The next factors in the two hierarchies also reversed their order. The factor in sixth place in the thrust hierarchy, "Feeling of closeness to actors," is in seventh place in the proscenium hierarchy. The factor in sixth place in the proscenium hierarchy, "Illusion of reality created," is in seventh place in the thrust hierarchy.

It should be noted that the factors which rank in different order on the two hierarchies are not necessarily the ones which analysis by the extension of the median test indicated made significantly different contributions toward the two audiences' emotional involvement. Rather, there were no significant differences between audience ratings on two of the scales which ranked differently on the hierarchies: "Identification with specific character" and "Feeling of closeness to actors."

The results of this study indicate that stage form did not strongly affect the relative importance of various factors in the creation of the audience members' emotional involvement with the performance. Stage form did, however, strongly influence the extent to which the various factors contributed toward the creation of this

emotional involvement. For example, "Emotion portrayed on stage" was credited by both audiences with being the factor most responsible for their emotional involvement with the production. But the median responses indicated that the proscenium audience felt that this factor made an even stronger contribution to their aesthetic response than did the thrust audience.

#### Factors Contributing Toward Intellectual Involvement

Its advocates suggest that the thrust stage audience members' greater involvement with the performance is the result of conscious, voluntary participation. Although intellectual involvement is certainly a form of conscious, voluntary involvement, there was no significant difference in the duration of the performance during which the thrust and proscenium respondents were intellectually involved. A series of scales was included in the questionnaire to determine if the contribution of various factors toward the audience members' intellectual involvement differed in the thrust and proscenium theatres.

Comparison of scales by extension of median test.--Only one factor was identified which made a greater contribution toward the audience members' intellectual involvement in one theatre form than in another. See Table 18. This factor, "Imaginative augmentation of setting," was credited by the proscenium respondents with making a greater contribution toward their intellectual involvement than it was by the thrust respondents. Thrust advocates indicate that imaginatively augmenting the setting should create a form of conscious, voluntary involvement with the performance in the theatre goer.

However, in this study the proscenium respondents had imagined more complete and detailed settings than had the thrust respondents, so it was their aesthetic responses which were most affected by this mental activity. As can be seen by inspection of Table 18, all of the other factors studied in this series were rated by both audiences as making similar contributions toward the establishment of their intellectual involvement in the performance.

TABLE 18.--Audience ratings: stage types by factors' contributions toward intellectual involvement

Factor	Medians		Chi Square
	Thrust	Proscenium	
Analytical interest in actor's interpretation	2.15	2.21	.03
Analytical interest in action and movement	3.12	2.95	.65
Analytical interest in setting, properties and costumes	3.65	3.22	2.75
Your feeling of closeness to actors	4.06	3.66	2.46
Your feeling of separation from actors	5.34	4.91	.74
Awareness of production as theatrical performance	3.35	3.31	.28
Your imaginative augmentation of setting	4.44	3.73	10.83**

\*\*Significant at the .01 level.

Hierarchy resulting from ranking by median response.--The hierarchies indicating the relative importance of various factors in



establishing thrust and proscenium audience members' intellectual involvement with the performance were very similar. See Table 19. The only difference in ranking resulted from the inversion of the factors "Analytical interest in setting, properties, and costumes" and "Awareness of production as theatrical performance," in third and fourth places in the two hierarchies. "Awareness of production as theatrical performance," which ranked higher in the thrust than in the proscenium hierarchy, is suggested by thrust advocates as a factor which would aid in the establishment of a conscious involvement of the audience members with the performance in that stage form.

The factor rated as most important in the creation of their intellectual involvement by both audiences was "Analytical interest in actor's interpretation." Inspection of the median responses for this and the factor ranking second indicate that the respondents rated this factor as far more important than any other. The factors which were rated in fifth, sixth, and seventh place, respectively, and thus as least important, "Feeling of closeness to actors," "Imaginative augmentation of setting," and "Feeling of separation from actors," all had medians ranging in the middle of the scale. The respondents thus apparently felt that these factors did not make strong contributions toward their intellectual involvement with the performance.

In this study, then, stage form had very little effect on the audience members' intellectual involvement with the production. There was no significant difference in the duration of the performance that either audience was intellectually involved and very little difference

TABLE 19.--Ranking of factors contributing toward the thrust and the proscenium audiences' intellectual involvement

Thrust		Proscenium	
Factor	Median	Factor	Median
1. Analytical interest in actor's interpretation	2.15	1. Analytical interest in actor's interpretation	2.21
2. Analytical interest in action and movement	3.12	2. Analytical interest in action and movement	2.95
3. Awareness of production as theatrical performance	3.35	3. Analytical interest in setting, properties and costumes	3.22
4. Analytical interest in setting, properties and costumes	3.65	4. Awareness of production as theatrical performance	3.31
5. Feeling of closeness to actors	4.06	5. Feeling of closeness to actors	3.66
6. Imaginative augmentation of setting	4.44	6. Imaginative augmentation of setting	3.73
7. Feeling of separation from actors	5.34	7. Feeling of separation from actors	4.91

in the importance of various factors in the creation of intellectual involvement in the two theatre forms.

Contribution of Various Aesthetic  
Experiences to Enjoyment  
of the Production

The ultimate goal of all theatre productions is the achievement of a satisfactory aesthetic response within the audience members. Thus this researcher felt it was important not only to determine the influence of stage form on the audience members' focus, on the contribution of various factors toward creation of facets of the aesthetic experience, and on the duration of various aesthetic responses, but especially on the contribution of specific aesthetic reactions to the audience members' enjoyment of the performance. A series of scales was therefore included on the questionnaire, on which the respondents rated the influence of various facets of the aesthetic experience on their personal enjoyment.

Comparison of Scales by  
Extension of Median Test

The responses of the thrust and proscenium stage audiences to these scales were significantly different in three instances: "Feeling of remoteness and formality created," "Imaginative involvement in production," and "Illusion of reality created." See Table 20. In all three instances the proscenium audience rated these experiences as contributing more to their enjoyment of the performance than did the thrust audience.

TABLE 20.--Audience ratings: stage type by effect of aesthetic response on enjoyment

Factor	Medians		Chi Square
	Thrust	Proscenium	
Feeling of intimacy created	3.38	3.30	.08
Feeling of remoteness and formality created	6.18	5.66	4.49*
Your emotional response to production	2.81	2.63	1.25
Your intellectual response to production	2.64	2.67	1.04
Your imaginative involvement in production	3.38	2.86	7.16**
Your feeling of being a part of the audience	5.66	5.83	.53
Illusion of reality created	3.83	2.98	9.97**
Viewing production as theatrical performance	3.97	3.75	.43**

\*Significant at the .05 level.

\*\*Significant at the .01 level.

The illusion of reality created made a significantly greater contribution to the proscenium audience's enjoyment of the performance than to the thrust audience's enjoyment of the performance. Other findings of this study relative to the creation of the illusion of reality and its effect on facets of the aesthetic experience also point up its importance in the proscenium theatre. The proscenium audience viewed the production as reality for a greater duration of the performance than the thrust audience. They identified seven

factors which contributed more toward the creation of the illusion of reality on the proscenium than on the thrust stage. And they credited the illusion of reality with contributing more toward their emotional involvement than the thrust respondents. These findings support the belief that one advantage of the proscenium theatre is its greater power to create illusion.

Thrust advocates indicate that thrust audience members' theatre experience is enhanced by their greater imaginative involvement in the production. This idea was not verified by the findings of this study. Rather, the proscenium respondents rated their "Imaginative involvement in the production" as making a greater contribution to their enjoyment of the performance than did the thrust respondents. The proscenium respondents also rated themselves as "Imaginatively participating in the production" for a far greater duration of the performance than the thrust respondents. When discussing the audience members' imaginative involvement, writers stress the imaginative augmentation of the setting. The proscenium respondents rated themselves as imagining more complete settings for the various scenes. However, there was no significant difference in the extent to which the two audiences' imaginative augmentation of the setting involved them in, or distracted them from the performance. The median responses to this scale indicated that both audiences felt their imaginative augmentation of the setting was a positive, enjoyable experience. The proscenium audience credited its imaginative involvement in the performance with enhancing its aesthetic experience in a number of ways. They rated this involvement as making a greater contribution to the creation of the illusion of

reality, to reminding them that they were watching a theatrical performance, to their emotional involvement, and to their intellectual involvement in the production than did the thrust audience. Thus imaginative involvement was more important in the proscenium theatre than in the thrust theatre.

The literature suggests that the "Feeling of remoteness and formality created" enhances the proscenium audience members' enjoyment of the production to a greater extent than it does the thrust audience members'. The results of this study support this idea. The literature also suggests that because the proscenium stage architecture, unlike thrust stage architecture, provides a physical separation between actor and audience it fosters a strong feeling of isolation from the performance in the audience members. Yet, in this study there were no significant differences in the two audiences' feelings of involvement with or separation from the performance. However, the proscenium respondents rated their feeling of separation from the actors as contributing more toward their perception of the performance as reality and toward their emotional involvement with the performance than did the thrust respondents.

There were no significant differences in the thrust and proscenium audiences' ratings of the contributions of the other aesthetic experiences listed toward their enjoyment of the performance. This was unexpected, for thrust advocates suggest that the "Feeling of intimacy created," the "Feeling of being a part of the audience," and "Viewing the production as a theatrical performance" should contribute more to the thrust than to the proscenium audience members' enjoyment of the

performance. Emotional and intellectual responses, as they can be considered as greater and lesser forms of involuntary and voluntary involvement, are considered more important in the proscenium and thrust theatres, respectively. Under the conditions of this study there was no significantly different effect in the two theatre forms from the contribution of these reactions toward the audience members' enjoyment of the performance.

#### Hierarchy Resulting from Ranking by Median Response

When ranking the factors which influenced the thrust and proscenium audiences' enjoyment of the production, from those making the maximum contribution, to those making the minimum contribution through the use of each audience's median response, two different hierarchies of factors emerged. See Table 21. The differences in the hierarchies result from the simple inversion of the aesthetic responses ranked in first and second places, in fourth and fifth places, and in seventh and eighth places. Thus no factor ranked more than one place different in the two hierarchies, with the technical exception of "Feeling of intimacy created," which ranks fifth in the proscenium hierarchy and is tied for third in the thrust hierarchy.<sup>12</sup> The variations in ranking correlate strongly with ideas related to the influence of stage form on audience response.

The factor ranked as making the greatest contribution toward their enjoyment of the performance by the thrust respondents was their

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<sup>12</sup> Because of the tie, there is no fourth place factor in the thrust hierarchy.

TABLE 21.--Aesthetic responses ranked by the extent to which they contributed to the thrust and the proscenium audiences' enjoyment of the performance

Thrust		Proscenium	
Aesthetic Experience	Median	Aesthetic Experience	Median
1. Intellectual response to production	2.64	1. Emotional response to production	2.63
2. Emotional response to production	2.81	2. Intellectual response to production	2.67
3. Imaginative involvement in production	3.38	3. Imaginative involvement in production	2.86
4. Feeling of intimacy created	3.38	4. Illusion of reality created	2.98
5. Illusion of reality created	3.83	5. Feeling of intimacy created	3.30
6. Viewing production as theatrical performance	3.97	6. Viewing production as theatrical performance	3.75
7. Feeling of being part of the audience	5.66	7. Feeling of remoteness and formality created	5.66
8. Feeling of remoteness and formality created	6.18	8. Feeling of being a part of the audience	5.83



"Intellectual response to the production," while the factor ranked as making the greatest contribution toward their enjoyment of the performance by the proscenium respondents was their "Emotional response to the production." These findings support theory which suggests that audience members' enjoyment of a performance in a thrust theatre stems from their conscious, voluntary responses to the performance, while audience members' enjoyment of a performance in a proscenium theatre stems in part from their subconscious, involuntary responses. Certainly intellectual responses are more rational, voluntary responses than are emotional responses.

The factor ranked as making the third greatest contribution toward their enjoyment of the performance by both audiences was their "Imaginative involvement in the production." Thrust advocates stress the contribution of thrust audience members' imaginative involvement to the achievement of a satisfying aesthetic experience. Under the conditions of this study the audience members' imaginative involvement in the performance was very important in the proscenium theatre too. The reader will note that although "Imaginative involvement in the production" is in third place in both hierarchies, the median response of the proscenium audience, 2.86, is much lower than the 3.38 median of the thrust audience, indicating the proscenium audience was the most imaginatively involved of the two. The findings of this study relative to the importance of the audience members' imaginative involvement in the proscenium theatre in no way negates the theory which stresses the importance of such a response in the total theatre aesthetic experience. However, findings of this study do indicate that the thrust stage form

itself was not responsible for the audience members' imaginative involvement.

Tied for third place in the thrust hierarchy with "Imaginative involvement in the performance" was "Feeling of intimacy created." Following these factors in that hierarchy is "Illusion of reality created." In the proscenium hierarchy "Illusion of reality created" ranks in fourth place, while the following, fifth place, factor is "Feeling of intimacy created." These inversions again correlate with the idea that intimacy is more important in the thrust than the proscenium theatre and that the creation of the illusion of reality is more important in the proscenium than in the thrust theatre. However, these aesthetic responses are not generally credited with being as important on the opposite stage forms as these hierarchies suggest.

In sixth place on both hierarchies is "Viewing production as theatrical performance." This is the response which the proscenium audience ranked as experiencing throughout more of the performance than any other aesthetic response. The thrust audience ranked it as their second most prominent response. In this study, then, there was no strong correlation between the duration of this response and its importance to the audience members' enjoyment of the performance. Thrust advocates cite the greater theatricality of the thrust stage form as one of the reasons for its excellence. The findings of this study do not indicate that there was more benefit derived by one audience or another from "Viewing the production as a theatrical performance."

The experiences rated as contributing the least toward their enjoyment of the performance by both audiences were their "Feeling of being part of the audience" and the "Feeling of remoteness and formality created." Again the rankings of these experiences were transposed by the two audiences. The thrust audience rated its "Feeling of being part of the audience" as more important in its enjoyment of the performance than the "Feeling of remoteness and formality created." The proscenium audience reversed this order. The literature indicated that a measure of the thrust theatre goers' enjoyment is derived from their awareness of being a part of the audience. Various authors also suggest that a satisfying aesthetic response is achieved in the proscenium theatre partially because of the spectators' separation from the stage. The difference in thrust and proscenium rankings of these two factors reflects these ideas. However, the medians for these factors range from 5.66 to 6.18, which are comparatively high medians for this study. Thus both audiences are apparently indicating that neither of these factors was of major importance in their enjoyment of the performance.

The differences in thrust and proscenium hierarchies indicate that the audience members did perceive themselves as gaining their most satisfying aesthetic responses from different experiences in the thrust and proscenium theatres. However, as the extension of the median tests indicated, the changes in importance of various aesthetic experiences in the two theatre forms were not as extensive as theory indicated they might be. The results of this study seem to suggest that each aesthetic experience holds a relatively fixed position in a hypothetical hierarchy

of factors contributing toward the audience members' enjoyment of any form of theatrical presentation, but stage form and characteristics of the production which enhance a particular aesthetic experience can affect its relative importance to a limited degree.

## CHAPTER V

### CONCLUSIONS

Many people in the contemporary theatre advocate the use of the thrust stage theatre because of the actor-audience relationship which exists in this theatre form. Other theatre practitioners prefer the form of actor-audience confrontation found in the proscenium theatre. Preference for a given form is normally based upon a belief that form has a function in producing the "ideal" aesthetic response within the audience. However, a review of the literature shows little agreement as to the influence of stage form on audience response and no studies exist which deal specifically with the influence of stage form on audience response. As a result, this study was undertaken to compare the influence of the thrust and proscenium stage forms on audience response. The data for the study were derived from questionnaires completed by thrust and proscenium theatre audience members viewing essentially the same production of Hamlet. The scale responses of the two audiences were compared by the extension of the median test to determine if the responses were significantly different. Scales examining components of the same aesthetic experience were ranked by each audience's median response to determine the relative importance of each component. The results of this study both support and refute concepts in the literature.

A summary of the findings of this study follows:

More respondents preferred the thrust than preferred the proscenium stage form.

The major reasons cited for preferring the thrust stage were: it fostered audience involvement with the performance, naturalness on stage, intimacy and better visibility. The reasons most cited for preferring the proscenium stage were: better focus, greater familiarity, and less awareness of other audience members.

Stage form had some influence on audience response. However, there were also many instances when there were no significant differences in response due to stage form. In other instances the influence of stage form seemed to be negated or enhanced by special aspects of the production. For example, the non-illusionistic, raked stage thrusting through the proscenium arch may have negated the proscenium barrier effect.

The audience's intellectual response was more important in the thrust theatre; while its emotional response was more important in the proscenium theatre. The illusion of reality was more effectively created in the proscenium theatre. Although extensive and more dominant in the proscenium than in the thrust theatre, enjoyment of the production as a theatrical performance was a relatively unimportant response.

The focus of the audience was affected by stage form. Somewhat more emphasis was placed upon the technical elements in the proscenium theatre, and upon the actor and audience in the thrust theatre.

Factors which combined to create a particular aesthetic response varied in the thrust and proscenium theatres. Often the contribution of a factor toward the creation of a given response reflected the importance of that factor in the particular theatre form.

The thrust advocates' predictions of the effect of various experiences, such as the audience members' awareness of the floor, awareness of the audience, or imaginative involvement in the performance, upon the aesthetic response were often accurate. However, these effects often were achieved in both theatre forms.

Because this study dealt with a relatively unexplored area, the results of the investigation should be of interest to all theatre artists. With a knowledge of the influence of stage form on audience response, the theatre practitioner could better utilize his art to

evoke the audience reaction he desires. It should be noted, however, that this study has only begun the examination of the relationship of stage form to audience response. Because of the number of uncontrollable variables inherent in the performance situation, as well as the ephemeral nature of the aesthetic response, this investigation was limited to description. Specific interpretations of the findings do not extend beyond the cited examples.

A number of possibilities for further research evolved from this exploratory study. Investigations need to be made to verify or refute the findings of this study so that generalizations can be drawn regarding the influence of stage form on audience response. The findings of this study also led the writer to do some speculation:

Similarities between thrust and proscenium audience rankings of components of the aesthetic experience and lack of a significant difference in their response to many of the scales suggest that a basic aesthetic response exists which can be influenced by stage form only to a limited degree.

The production appeared to have the ability to enhance or negate the influence of stage form. It would be valuable to determine to what extent and in what ways this is possible. If the production truly has a strong influence on audience response, it ought to be possible to achieve a desired response in all theatre forms.

It appears that there may be certain theatre experiences which always induce a given response. Thus the audience members' imaginative augmentation of the setting may always involve them in the performance. What are these experiences and what responses will they induce?

Proscenium audiences are not as accustomed to seeing actors' backs or imaginatively augmenting the setting as are thrust audiences. Therefore the proscenium audience's greater enjoyment of their awareness of the actors' backs and greater imaginative involvement in the performance suggest that stimuli such as these may be even more effective in a form of theatre in which they are anachronistic. If this is shown to be true, differences of opinion regarding stage form may be irrelevant.

The following questions also arose as this study progressed:

Can a truly experimental study, utilizing stringent controls, be developed to study the influence of stage form on audience response? Would the findings of a study so structured concur with those of the present study?

Is one stage form more suited to a particular type of drama than another? Would the effect of stage form on audience response change if a comedy or a realistic play were being performed, rather than a Shakesperean drama?

In what instances, if any, and to what extent is distance from the actor rather than stage form the critical factor in influencing aesthetic response?

What is the true nature of the aesthetic experience? How can the aesthetic response be accurately measured?

Is there in fact an ideal theatre aesthetic response? If so, what is it?

Investigations examining the writer's speculations and answering the questions posed above would provide valuable information relating to the theatre aesthetic experience and to stage form.



APPENDIX I

PRETEST COVER LETTERS

AND

PRETEST QUESTIONNAIRES

Cover Letter for Pretest Questionnaire A

Thank you for giving of your time to assist in my research. I am developing the enclosed questionnaire for eventual administration to audiences viewing plays on both the thrust and proscenium stages. My purpose is to determine if the form of stage upon which a play is presented affects the audiences' responses.

Please do not read or fill out the questionnaire until after you view tonight's performance of Hamlet. Since this study is concerned with measuring the responses of every individual audience member, please record your responses to the questions as you interpret them. If a question is difficult to answer or ambiguous please comment on this fact, try to explain why, and then answer it to the best of your ability. There are no correct answers, just different answers. The scales are designed to indicate possible degrees of difference in response between the extremes of experience indicated. The center area on each scale is the "neutral" zone. Please place a check in the segment which most closely describes your experience; ie. is your response related to the descriptive phrase at one end of the scale or is it best characterized by an intermediate point on the scale. If, after you have completed the questionnaire, you have any suggestions for its improvement, please include these suggestions on the back of the questionnaire.

The completed questionnaire along with your suggestions for its improvement can be given to an usher, left at the box office, or returned in the enclosed envelope.

Thank you again for your cooperation.

Lorraine Gross  
Department of Speech  
Michigan State University

## AUDIENCE QUESTIONNAIRE A

Which form of stage do you prefer?

- ☐ Proscenium - Conventional picture frame stage  
☐ Thrust - Stage with audience members on three sides

Why do you prefer the form you selected above?

Seat number for tonight's performance? \_\_\_\_\_

What seating area or seat do you believe would have been the most desirable one from which to view tonight's performance? Please check one in each column.

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Left side of auditorium      | <input type="checkbox"/> First three rows from stage  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Center section of auditorium | <input type="checkbox"/> Front section of auditorium  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Right side of auditorium     | <input type="checkbox"/> Center section of auditorium |
|   | <input type="checkbox"/> Back section of auditorium   |

Please indicate, with a check, on the scale the approximate degree to which you believe sitting in that area would heighten (or heightened) your enjoyment of the performance.

Immeasurably \_\_\_\_\_ Not at all

For what percentage of the performance were you completely absorbed by the production? \_\_\_\_\_ %

For what percentage of the performance were you aware of yourself as an audience member watching a theatrical production? \_\_\_\_\_

To what extent were you emotionally involved in the performance?

A great deal \_\_\_\_\_ Not at all

To what extent were you intellectually involved in the performance?

A great deal \_\_\_\_\_ Not at all

When did you become most involved in the performance?

To what factors do you attribute your involvement in the performance at these times?

When did you find yourself most easily distracted from the performance?

To what factors do you attribute your lack of complete involvement with the performance at these times?

Approximately how many times did you find yourself responding to the performance by assuming a position or muscular tension related to the activities on stage? \_\_\_\_

How many times did you find yourself responding emotionally to the performance by laughing, crying, sighing, wanting to warn or shake the character, etc.? \_\_\_\_

What was the intensity of these responses?

Very intense response \_\_\_\_\_ Very slight response

How often did you identify yourself with characters in the play? \_

Throughout the entire performance \_\_\_\_\_ Not at all

What was the intensity of this identification?

Very intense \_\_\_\_\_ Very casual

As you watched tonight's performance, did it take on the illusion of "reality" or did it become a theatrical ritual?

Completely forgot that \_\_\_\_\_ Constantly aware of production  
production was a \_\_\_\_\_ as a theatrical performance  
theatrical performance

What effect did this have on your enjoyment of tonight's performance?

Detracted from \_\_\_\_\_ Enhanced enjoyment  
enjoyment

What factors contributed toward aiding the production take on the illusion of "reality"?

What factors contributed toward reminding you that you were watching a theatrical performance?

Approximately how many times during the performance were you reminded that you were a member of an audience watching a theatrical presentation? \_\_\_\_

Did you feel like an integral part of the performance or did you view the performance as an entity separate from yourself?

Performance and self \_\_\_\_\_ Performance and self distinctly  
fused into one \_\_\_\_\_ separate entities

When viewing the performance did you focus completely on the stage action or did you also constantly observe the surrounding audience?

Focused only on \_\_\_\_\_ Focused on audience and action  
stage action

To what extent were you aware of the third dimension, depth, in the action?

Production seemed \_\_\_\_\_ Production seemed very  
primarily two-dimensional \_\_\_\_\_ three-dimensional

Please indicate on the scales the approximate degree of your awareness of each of the indicated production elements and the relative extent to which they contributed to your enjoyment of tonight's performance.

## COSTUMES

Unaware	_____	Highly aware
Enhanced enjoyment	_____	Detracted from enjoyment

## LIGHTING

Unaware	_____	Highly aware
Enhanced enjoyment	_____	Detracted from enjoyment

## SCENIC OR ARCHITECTURAL BACKGROUND

Unaware	_____	Highly aware
Enhanced enjoyment	_____	Detracted from enjoyment

## STAGE FLOOR

Unaware	_____	Highly aware
Enhanced enjoyment	_____	Detracted from enjoyment

## PROPERTIES (SWORDS, FURNITURE, FLAGS, ETC.,)

Unaware	_____	Highly aware
Enhanced enjoyment	_____	Detracted from enjoyment

## OTHER AUDIENCE MEMBERS

Unaware	_____	Highly aware
Enhanced enjoyment	_____	Detracted from enjoyment

## TOTAL STAGE PICTURE (ACTORS, SETTING, ETC.,)

Unaware	_____	Highly aware
Enhanced enjoyment	_____	Detracted from enjoyment

## ACTOR'S GROUP MOVEMENT PATTERNS

Unaware	_____	Highly aware
Enhanced enjoyment	_____	Detracted from enjoyment

## BODY POSITION AND MOVEMENT OF INDIVIDUAL ACTORS

Unaware	_____	Highly aware
Enhanced enjoyment	_____	Detracted from enjoyment

## FACIAL EXPRESSIONS OF INDIVIDUAL ACTORS

Unaware	_____	Highly aware
Enhanced enjoyment	_____	Detracted from enjoyment

## ACTIVITIES OF NON-SPEAKING ACTORS

Unaware	_____	Highly aware
Enhanced enjoyment	_____	Detracted from enjoyment

## ACTOR'S BACKS

Unaware	_____	Highly aware
Enhanced enjoyment	_____	Detracted from enjoyment

To what degree did you consciously or unconsciously imagine "total environments", ie. complete settings for the various scenes?

Mentally "saw" very \_\_\_\_\_ Saw settings just as they  
complete settings were presented

What effect do you believe the addition of more detailed, realistic scenery and properties would have had on your enjoyment of the play?

Would have enjoyed \_\_\_\_\_ Would have enjoyed it far less  
it much more

Why do you believe this is true?

What did you notice most about the setting, costumes and lighting during tonight's performance?

What did you notice most about the acting during tonight's performance?

When during tonight's performance would you like to have been closer to the action?

Why was this true?

When during tonight's performance would you have preferred to be further from the stage?

Why was this true?

Approximately how many plays do you see on a thrust stage in a year? \_\_\_\_\_

Approximately how many plays have you seen (total) on a thrust stage? \_\_\_\_\_

Approximately how many plays do you see on a proscenium stage in a year? \_\_\_\_\_

Please check any of the following activities in which you have participated:

- \_\_\_\_\_ Had formal classes in theatre
- \_\_\_\_\_ Taught formal classes in theatre
- \_\_\_\_\_ Acted on stage for fun and relaxation
- \_\_\_\_\_ Acted on stage for reimbursement
- \_\_\_\_\_ Designed costumes or settings for fun and relaxation
- \_\_\_\_\_ Designed costumes or settings for reimbursement
- \_\_\_\_\_ Directed productions for fun and relaxation
- \_\_\_\_\_ Directed productions for reimbursement
- \_\_\_\_\_ Worked backstage

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Occupation \_\_\_\_\_ Age \_\_\_\_\_

(Although it is not essential, we would appreciate your name as a means of identifying your questionnaire. Your response will be kept confidential.)

Cover Letter for Pretest Questionnaire B

Thank you for giving of your time to assist in my research. I am developing the enclosed questionnaire for eventual administration to audiences viewing plays on both the thrust and proscenium stages. My purpose is to determine if the form of stage upon which a play is presented affects the audiences' responses.

Please do not read or fill out the questionnaire until after you view tonight's performance of Hamlet. Since this study is concerned with measuring the responses of every individual audience member, please record your responses to the questions as you interpret them. If a question is difficult to answer or ambiguous please comment on this fact and then answer it to the best of your ability. There are no correct answers, just different answers. The scales are designed to indicate possible degrees of difference in response between the extremes of experience indicated. Please place a check within the segment which most closely describes your experience; ie. is your response related to the descriptive phrase at one end of the scale or is it best characterized by an intermediate point on the scale:

☐ ☐ ☐ ☒ ☐ ☐ ☐ .

If, after you have completed the questionnaire, you have any suggestions for its improvement, please include these suggestions on the back of the form. The completed questionnaire along with your suggestions for its improvement can be given to an usher, left at the box office, or returned in the enclosed envelope.

Thank you again for your cooperation.

Lorraine Gross  
Department of Speech  
Michigan State University

## AUDIENCE QUESTIONNAIRE B

Which form of stage do you prefer?

- ☐ Proscenium - Conventional picture frame stage  
☐ Thrust - Stage with audience members on three sides

Why do you prefer the form you selected above?

Seat number for tonight's performance? \_\_\_\_\_

What seating area or seat do you believe would have been the most desirable one from which to view tonight's performance? Please check one in each column.

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Left side of auditorium      | <input type="checkbox"/> First three rows from stage  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Center section of auditorium | <input type="checkbox"/> Front section of auditorium  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Right side of auditorium     | <input type="checkbox"/> Center section of auditorium |
|   | <input type="checkbox"/> Back section of auditorium   |

Please indicate, with a check, on the scale the approximate degree to which you believe sitting in that area would heighten (or heightened) your enjoyment of the performance.

Immeasurably \_\_\_\_\_ Not at all

For what percentage of the performance were you completely absorbed by the production? \_\_\_\_\_ %

For what percentage of the performance were you aware of yourself as an audience member watching a theatrical production? \_\_\_\_\_

To what extent were you emotionally involved in the performance?

A great deal \_\_\_\_\_ Not at all

To what extent were you intellectually involved in the performance?

A great deal \_\_\_\_\_ Not at all

When did you become most involved in the performance?













To what factors do you attribute your involvement in the performance at these times?

When did you find yourself most easily distracted from the performance?







To what factors do you attribute your lack of complete involvement with the performance at these times?



Please indicate on the scales the approximate degree of your awareness of each of the indicated elements. When ranking each element, consider the degree to which you were aware of that element in relation to all the other elements listed.

Unaware		Highly aware
	COSTUMES	
Unaware		Highly aware
	LIGHTING	
Unaware		Highly aware
	SCENIC OR ARCHITECTURAL BACKGROUND	
Unaware		Highly aware
	STAGE FLOOR	
Unaware		Highly aware
	PROPERTIES (SWORDS, FURNITURE, ETC.,)	
Unaware		Highly aware
	OTHER AUDIENCE MEMBERS	
Unaware		Highly aware
	TOTAL STAGE PICTURE (ACTORS, SETTING, ETC.,)	
Unaware		Highly aware
	ACTOR'S GROUP MOVEMENT PATTERNS	
Unaware		Highly aware
	BODY POSITION AND MOVEMENT OF INDIVIDUAL ACTORS	
Unaware		Highly aware
	FACIAL EXPRESSIONS OF INDIVIDUAL ACTORS	
Unaware		Highly aware
	ACTIVITIES OF NON-SPEAKING ACTORS	
Unaware		Highly aware
	ACTOR'S BACKS	

Indicate on the scale the approximate degree to which each of the elements contributed to your enjoyment of tonight's performance. When ranking each element, consider the influence of the element relative to all the other elements listed.

Enhanced enjoyment		Detracted from enjoyment
	COSTUMES	
Enhanced enjoyment		Detracted from enjoyment
	LIGHTING	
Enhanced enjoyment		Detracted from enjoyment
	SCENIC OR ARCHITECTURAL BACKGROUND	
Enhanced enjoyment		Detracted from enjoyment
	STAGE FLOOR	
Enhanced enjoyment		Detracted from enjoyment
	PROPERTIES (SWORDS, FURNITURE, ETC.,)	
Enhanced enjoyment		Detracted from enjoyment
	OTHER AUDIENCE MEMBERS	

Enhanced enjoyment \_\_\_\_\_ Detracted from enjoyment  
TOTAL STAGE PICTURE (ACTORS, SETTING, ETC.,)

Enhanced enjoyment \_\_\_\_\_ Detracted from enjoyment  
ACTOR'S GROUP MOVEMENT PATTERNS

Enhanced enjoyment \_\_\_\_\_ Detracted from enjoyment  
BODY POSITION AND MOVEMENT OF INDIVIDUAL ACTORS

Enhanced enjoyment \_\_\_\_\_ Detracted from enjoyment  
FACIAL EXPRESSIONS OF INDIVIDUAL ACTORS

Enhanced enjoyment \_\_\_\_\_ Detracted from enjoyment  
ACTIVITIES OF NON-SPEAKING ACTORS

Enhanced enjoyment \_\_\_\_\_ Detracted from enjoyment  
ACTOR'S BACKS

Approximately how many times did you find yourself responding to the performance by assuming a position or muscular tension related to the activities on stage? \_\_\_\_\_

How many times did you find yourself responding emotionally to the performance by laughing, crying, sighing, wanting to warn or shake the character, etc., ? \_\_\_\_\_

What was the intensity of these responses?

Very intense \_\_\_\_\_ Very slight  
response response

How often did you identify yourself with characters in the play?  
Throughout the \_\_\_\_\_ Not at all  
entire performance

What was the intensity of this identification?

Very intense \_\_\_\_\_ Very casual

As you watched tonight's performance, did it take on the illusion of "reality" or did it become a theatrical ritual?

Completely forgot that \_\_\_\_\_ Constantly aware of production  
production was a as a theatrical performance  
theatrical performance

What effect did this have on your enjoyment of tonight's performance?

Enhanced enjoyment \_\_\_\_\_ Detracted from enjoyment

What factors contributed toward aiding the production take on the illusion of "reality"?

What factors contributed toward reminding you that you were watching a theatrical performance?

Approximately how many times during the performance were you reminded that you were a member of an audience watching a theatrical presentation? \_\_\_\_\_

Did you feel like an integral part of the performance or did you view the performance as an entity separate from yourself?

Performance and self fused into one \_\_\_\_\_ Performance and self distinctly separate entities

When viewing the performance did you focus completely on the stage action or did you also constantly observe the surrounding audience?

Focused only on stage action \_\_\_\_\_ Focused on audience and action

To what extent were you aware of spacial dimensions, specifically a sense of depth, in the action?

Production seemed primarily two-dimensional \_\_\_\_\_ Production seemed very three-dimensional

To what degree did you consciously or unconsciously imagine "total environments", ie. complete settings for the various scenes?

Mentally "saw" very complete settings \_\_\_\_\_ Saw settings just as they were presented

What effect do you believe the addition of more detailed, realistic scenery and properties would have had on your enjoyment of the play?

Would have enjoyed it much more \_\_\_\_\_ Would have enjoyed it far less

Why do you believe this is true?

What did you notice most about the settings, costumes and lighting during tonight's performance?

When during tonight's performance would you like to have been closer to the action?

When during tonight's performance would you have preferred to be further from the stage?

Why was this true?

Approximately how many plays do you see on a thrust stage in a year? \_\_\_\_\_

Approximately how many plays have you seen (total) on a thrust stage? \_\_\_\_\_

Approximately how many plays do you see on a proscenium stage in a year? \_\_\_\_\_

**Please check any of the following activities in which you have participated:**

- ☐ Had formal classes in theatre
- ☐ Taught formal classes in theatre
- ☐ Acted on stage for fun and relaxation
- ☐ Acted on stage for reimbursement
- ☐ Designed costumes or settings for fun and relaxation
- ☐ Designed costumes or settings for reimbursement
- ☐ Directed productions for fun and relaxation
- ☐ Directed productions for reimbursement
- ☐ Worked backstage

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Occupation \_\_\_\_\_ Age \_\_\_\_\_  
(Although it is not essential, we would appreciate your name as a means of identifying your questionnaire. Your response will be kept confidential.)

## APPENDIX II

### QUESTIONNAIRE

— — — — — 1

1

We are asking tonight's audience to cooperate in a study designed to measure the responses of individual audience members to a theatrical performance. We realize that this request is rather unusual, however we hope you will take the time to aid us in our research for it is only with your assistance and the assistance of every audience member that we can do any depth analysis of the factors which combine to form the theatre aesthetic experience. Since this study is concerned with measuring the responses of every individual audience member, please record YOUR responses to the questions as you interpret them. There are no correct or better answers because each individual's aesthetic response is uniquely personal and extremely valuable to our study.

Please do not complete the questionnaire beyond the first page until after you view tonight's performance. After completing the questionnaire you may find it interesting to compare your responses to those of the other members of your theatre party. DO NOT, however, allow others to influence your answers.

I Seat number for tonight's performance? \_\_\_\_\_

II Which form of stage do you prefer?

- \_\_\_\_\_ Proscenium - Conventional picture frame stage  
 \_\_\_\_\_ Thrust - Stage with audience members on three sides

Why do you prefer the form you selected above?

III Approximately how many plays do you see on a thrust stage in a year? \_\_\_\_\_  
 Approximately how many plays have you seen (total) on a thrust stage? \_\_\_\_\_  
 Approximately how many plays do you see on a proscenium stage in a year? \_\_\_\_\_  
 Approximately how many plays have you seen (total) on a proscenium stage? \_\_\_\_\_

Please check any of the following activities in which you have participated:

- \_\_\_\_\_ Had formal classes in theatre  
 \_\_\_\_\_ Taught formal classes in theatre  
 \_\_\_\_\_ Acted on stage for fun and relaxation  
 \_\_\_\_\_ Acted on stage for reimbursement  
 \_\_\_\_\_ Designed costumes or settings for fun and relaxation  
 \_\_\_\_\_ Designed costumes or settings for reimbursement  
 \_\_\_\_\_ Directed productions for fun and relaxation  
 \_\_\_\_\_ Directed productions for reimbursement  
 \_\_\_\_\_ Worked backstage

IV What is your occupation? \_\_\_\_\_

Sex: \_\_\_\_\_ Male \_\_\_\_\_ Female

Age: \_\_\_\_\_ Under 18 \_\_\_\_\_ 31 - 40 \_\_\_\_\_ 51 - 60  
           \_\_\_\_\_ 18 - 22 \_\_\_\_\_ 41 - 50 \_\_\_\_\_ Over 60  
           \_\_\_\_\_ 23 - 30

Please do not remove this seal  
 until after tonight's performance of Hamlet.

The scales used in this questionnaire are designed to indicate possible degrees of difference in response between the extremes indicated in the headings. Please place a check on the segment which you believe most closely describes your response; for example: Highly aware  $\longleftrightarrow$  Slightly aware

— — — — — X —

- V Please rate on the scales below the degree of your awareness of each of the described kinds of stage movement.

Highly aware  $\longleftrightarrow$  Slightly aware

Movement across the stage from left to right or right to left

— — — — —

Movement from the front to back or back to front of the stage

— — — — —

Movement between the upper and lower stage platforms

— — — — —

- VI A production of a play can be broken down into elements such as acting, costuming and setting. Please indicate on the scales below the degree of your AWARENESS of each of these elements. When rating each element, consider the degree to which you were aware of that element in relation to all the other elements listed.

Highly aware  $\longleftrightarrow$  Slightly aware

COSTUMES	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
LIGHTING	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
SCENIC OR ARCHITECTURAL BACKGROUND	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
FLOOR	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
PROPERTIES (SWORDS, FURNITURE, ETC.)	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
BOOTS, JEWELRY, TRIM ON COSTUMES	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
DETAILS IN SETTING AND PROPERTIES	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
AUDIENCE	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
TOTAL STAGE PICTURE (ACTORS, SETTING, ETC.)	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
ACTORS' GROUP MOVEMENT PATTERNS	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
BODY POSITION AND MOVEMENT OF ACTORS	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
FACIAL EXPRESSIONS OF ACTORS	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
ACTIVITIES OF NON-SPEAKING ACTORS	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
ACTORS' BACKS	—	—	—	—	—	—	—

- VII What effect did your awareness of the actors' backs have on your enjoyment of tonight's performance?

Enhanced enjoyment — — — — — Detracted from enjoyment

VIII To what extent did you imagine complete settings for the various scenes?

Mentally "saw" \_\_\_\_\_ Saw settings just as  
very complete settings \_\_\_\_\_ they were presented

What affect do you believe the addition of more varied, detailed, realistic scenery and properties would have had on your enjoyment of the play?

Would have enjoyed it much more \_\_\_\_\_ Would have enjoyed it  
far less

Did you find that to imaginatively add to the setting (augment the setting) involved you in the performance or did you find that the necessity for imaginatively augmenting the setting was distracting?

Involved me in \_\_\_\_\_ Distracted me from  
the performance \_\_\_\_\_ performance

IX Please rate the contribution of each of the following factors in the creation of the illusion of REALITY on stage tonight.

	Maximum contribution	←	→	Minimum contribution
ACTING	_____			_____
FACIAL EXPRESSIONS AND MANNERISMS OF ACTORS	_____			_____
SCENIC OR ARCHITECTURAL BACKGROUND	_____			_____
DETAILS IN SETTING AND PROPERTIES	_____			_____
COSTUMING	_____			_____
BOOTS, JEWELRY, TRIM ON COSTUMES	_____			_____
FEELING OF CLOSENESS TO ACTORS AND STAGE	_____			_____
FEELING OF SEPARATION FROM ACTORS AND STAGE	_____			_____
YOUR IMAGINATIVE AUGMENTATION OF SETTING	_____			_____

X Please rate the contribution of each of the following factors in reminding you that this was a THEATRICAL PERFORMANCE.

	Maximum contribution	←	→	Minimum contribution
ACTING	_____			_____
SCENIC OR ARCHITECTURAL BACKGROUND	_____			_____
COSTUMING	_____			_____
AWARENESS OF FLOOR	_____			_____
AWARENESS OF AUDIENCE	_____			_____
FEELING OF CLOSENESS TO ACTORS AND STAGE	_____			_____
FEELING OF SEPARATION FROM ACTORS AND STAGE	_____			_____
YOUR IMAGINATIVE AUGMENTATION OF SETTING	_____			_____



2

4

XI One can be both emotionally and intellectually involved in a theatrical performance. Please rate the contribution of each of the following factors toward your EMOTIONAL INVOLVEMENT in the performance.

	Maximum contribution						Minimum contribution
ACTOR'S INTERPRETATION	___	___	___	___	___	___	___
ACTION PORTRAYED ON STAGE	___	___	___	___	___	___	___
EMOTION PORTRAYED ON STAGE	___	___	___	___	___	___	___
YOUR IDENTIFICATION WITH SPECIFIC CHARACTERS	___	___	___	___	___	___	___
YOUR SYMPATHY FOR SPECIFIC CHARACTERS	___	___	___	___	___	___	___
YOUR FEELING OF CLOSENESS TO ACTORS	___	___	___	___	___	___	___
YOUR FEELING OF SEPARATION FROM ACTORS	___	___	___	___	___	___	___
ILLUSION OF REALITY CREATED	___	___	___	___	___	___	___
YOUR IMAGINATIVE AUGMENTATION OF SETTING	___	___	___	___	___	___	___

XII Please rate the contribution of each of the following factors toward your INTELLECTUAL INVOLVEMENT in the performance.

	Maximum contribution						Minimum contribution
ANALYTICAL INTEREST IN ACTOR'S INTERPRETATION	___	___	___	___	___	___	___
ANALYTICAL INTEREST IN ACTION AND MOVEMENT	___	___	___	___	___	___	___
ANALYTICAL INTEREST IN SETTING, PROPERTIES AND COSTUMES	___	___	___	___	___	___	___
YOUR FEELING OF CLOSENESS TO ACTORS	___	___	___	___	___	___	___
YOUR FEELING OF SEPARATION FROM ACTORS	___	___	___	___	___	___	___
AWARENESS OF PRODUCTION AS THEATRICAL PERFORMANCE	___	___	___	___	___	___	___
YOUR IMAGINATIVE AUGMENTATION OF SETTING	___	___	___	___	___	___	___

XIII If you identified with Hamlet during the performance what was the intensity of your identification?

Very intense \_\_\_ \_\_\_ \_\_\_ \_\_\_ \_\_\_ \_\_\_ \_\_\_ Very slight

XIV To what extent did you find yourself responding to the performance by assuming a position or muscular tension related to the activities on stage?

Throughout \_\_\_ \_\_\_ \_\_\_ \_\_\_ \_\_\_ \_\_\_ \_\_\_ Not at all  
performance

What was the intensity of these responses?

Very intense \_\_\_ \_\_\_ \_\_\_ \_\_\_ \_\_\_ \_\_\_ \_\_\_ Very slight

Integral part of performance — — — — — Separate from performance

Oblivious to audience      —   —   —   —   —   —   —   Aware of audience

Maximum contribution  $\longleftrightarrow$  Minimum contribution

FEELING OF INTIMACY CREATED	___	___	___	___	___	___
FEELING OF REMOTENESS AND FORMALITY CREATED	___	___	___	___	___	___
YOUR EMOTIONAL RESPONSE TO PRODUCTION	___	___	___	___	___	___
YOUR INTELLECTUAL RESPONSE TO PRODUCTION	___	___	___	___	___	___
YOUR IMAGINATIVE INVOLVEMENT IN PRODUCTION	___	___	___	___	___	___
YOUR FEELING OF BEING A PART OF THE AUDIENCE	___	___	___	___	___	___
ILLUSION OF REALITY CREATED	___	___	___	___	___	___
VIEWING PRODUCTION AS THEATRICAL PERFORMANCE	___	___	___	___	___	___

Throughout performance  $\longleftrightarrow$  Not at all

EMOTIONAL INVOLVEMENT IN THE PRODUCTION	___	___	___	___	___	___
INTELLECTUAL INVOLVEMENT IN THE PRODUCTION	___	___	___	___	___	___
IMAGINATIVE PARTICIPATION IN THE PRODUCTION	___	___	___	___	___	___
ENJOYMENT OF PRODUCTION AS THEATRICAL PERFORMANCE	___	___	___	___	___	___
ENJOYMENT OF PRODUCTION AS "REALITY"	___	___	___	___	___	___
AWARENESS OF YOURSELF AS AN AUDIENCE MEMBER	___	___	___	___	___	___
COMPLETE INVOLVEMENT IN THE PRODUCTION	___	___	___	___	___	___

DEPARTMENT OF SPEECH  
MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY

APPENDIX III

REASONS STATED FOR  
STAGE FORM PREFERENCE

TABLE 22.--Reasons cited for preferring thrust stage

Reason Cited*	Number of Respondents Citing This Reason
Greater audience involvement and participation . . . . .	66
Feel more a part of the action of the performance . . . .	41
Better visibility . . . . .	35
More believable - more life-like - more natural . . . . .	34
Audience closer, thus greater visual and emotional contact . . . . .	32
More intimate . . . . .	24
Closer actor - audience relationship . . . . .	20
Possibilities of more interesting, more varied, more imaginative and more effective staging . . . . .	11
More three-dimensional - more depth . . . . .	9
Audience identifies more easily with play . . . . .	5
Depends on script - on production . . . . .	5
Greater freedom of movement . . . . .	5
Better for Shakespeare and Classics . . . . .	5
Action seems more natural - actors seem more free . . . .	5
Breakdown of aesthetic distance . . . . .	4
Action and actors take on greater importance than the setting . . . . .	4
Variety of viewing angles . . . . .	4
Forces actors to do a better job . . . . .	4

TABLE 22--Continued

Reason Cited*	Number of Respondents Citing This Reason
Novelty - less traditional - less conventional . . . . .	3
More details of performance revealed . . . . .	3
More variety possible - allows for free interpretation . .	3
Less artificial - less like television - no picture frame . . . . .	3
Audience uses imagination to fill in for scenery . . . . .	3
More a part of audience . . . . .	2
Larger stage - more space for action . . . . .	2
Audience participates while observing . . . . .	2
Setting more realistic and three-dimensional . . . . .	2
Audience more easily and completely captivated - absorbed . . . . .	2
Better establishment of aesthetic distance . . . . .	1
Familiarity . . . . .	1
Liked experience of viewing thrust performance . . . . .	1
Makeup, action, etc. is more realistic, less exaggerated . . . . .	1
Actors and interpretation more important than stage form . . . . .	1
Better viewing angle, like looking down on stage . . . . .	1
Easier to hear . . . . .	1
More flexible . . . . .	1

TABLE 22-Continued

Reason Cited*	Number of Respondents Citing This Reason
Stage has more varied uses - i.e. concerts . . . . .	1
Other interesting things to observe if play doesn't hold attention . . . . .	1

\*The reasons are recorded, as much as possible, in the respondents' own terminology. Thus some of the reasons, such as "More intimate" and "Closer actor-audience relationship," could be interpreted as having the same basic meaning.

TABLE 23.--Reasons cited for preferring proscenium stage

Reason Cited*	Number of Respondents Citing This Reason
Better focus - actors face audience . . . . .	60
Never saw thrust stage performance . . . . .	51
Familiarity . . . . .	16
Less aware of audience . . . . .	7
Better establishment of aesthetic distance . . . . .	6
Setting more effective . . . . .	5
More believable - more life-like - more natural . . . . .	4
Better visibility . . . . .	4
More suited to most scripts . . . . .	4
Maintains sense of theatre - of stage identity . . . . .	2
Captures imagination more easily . . . . .	2
Can not judge - saw only few thrust stage performances . .	2
More illusionary . . . . .	1
Greater audience involvement and participation . . . . .	1
Audience closer thus greater visual and emotional contact . . . . .	1
Disliked limited thrust stage experience . . . . .	1
Novelty - less traditional - less conventional . . . . .	1
Depends on script - on production . . . . .	1
Possibilities of more interesting, more varied, more imaginative and more effective staging . . . . .	1

TABLE 23--Continued

Reason Cited*	Number of Respondents Citing This Reason
Actors less conscious of audience and thus do a better job . . . . .	1
Less audience participation and involvement necessary--this is desirable for audience should observe, not participate . . . . .	1
Forces actors to do better job . . . . .	1
Easier to hear . . . . .	1
More flexible . . . . .	1
Easier to comprehend scope of play . . . . .	1

\*The reasons are recorded, as much as possible, in the respondents' own terminology.



TABLE 24.--Reasons cited for having no preference in stage form

Reason Cited*	Number of Respondents Citing This Reason
Never saw thrust stage performance . . . . .	3
Depends on script - on production . . . . .	3
Variety desirable so both types important . . . . .	3
Thrust better for serious drama, for tragedy . . . . .	1
Actors and interpretation more important than stage form . . . . .	1
Depends on your seat location, not stage type . . . . .	1

\*The reasons are recorded, as much as possible, in the respondents' own terminology.

TABLE 25.--Reasons cited for giving no response on question related to preference in stage form

Reason Cited*	Number of Respondents Citing This Reason
Never saw thrust stage performance . . . . .	14
Depends on script - on production . . . . .	6
No preference . . . . .	2
Can not judge - saw only few thrust stage performances . . . . .	1
Actors and interpretation more important than stage form . . . . .	1
Proscenium better suited to tragedy . . . . .	1
Thrust better for serious drama - for tragedy . . . . .	1

\*The reasons are recorded, as much as possible, in the respondents' own terminology.

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