

Significance of theatre in the history of western and eastern countries

[Parts of the World, Asia](#)



Since its inception, theatre has played an influential role in the lives of many. The study and practice of the theatrical arts can benefit the individual significantly, not just in terms of discovering one's untapped potential for acting, but also by eliminating the inhibitions of stage fright when performing in front of a live audience. Theatre has played many roles throughout history: stimulating creativity, calling for and instigating social changes, educating in history as well as current events, providing different perspectives and opinions about the many cultures of the world, and furthering the development of religions and myths within societies. In order to achieve these goals, cultures around the world have utilized a myriad of different theatrical styles and structures.

During World War II, theatre was organized by inmates of Nazi concentration camps, consisting of presentations that contained improvised literature and drama recited from memory, satirical skits, and traditional songs to resist the totalitarian regime of the Nazis. In ancient Greece, Satyr plays - brief comedic parodies in which performers dressed as a half man/half goat - contained erotic comedy which was explicit and vulgar with the intention of mocking Greek institutions such as government or religion. The differences in theatre are quite noticeable when concerning the culture involved and the time period in which the different types of theatre are practiced. Asian theatre, for example, relies much more on dance, song, chanting, and mime than Western theatre does, with a much heavier emphasis on symbolism.

Asian theatre also contains more visual and sensual elements than Western theatre, which is considered more intellectual or literary. Asian theatre is

also typically loosely plotted compared to Western theatre, with a much stronger emphasis on storytelling, stylization and tradition. This is due in part to the differences in Asian and Western culture; acting techniques are passed down from generation to generation in Asian theatre, which has resulted in both scripts and concepts developed hundreds of years ago to experience little change when presented to the modern audience. Even the stage within Asian theatre has remained fairly constant, markedly in Kabuki theatre - a Japanese form of theatre which combines elements of noh, bunraku, and folk theatre. The typical Kabuki stage is wide and has a relatively low proscenium - the portion of the stage in front of the curtain. Musicians are placed either onstage or offstage to accompany the action onstage. Kabuki features elaborate and beautiful scenic effects, including the revolving stage. Another device used in kabuki is the hanamachi - a raised narrow platform connecting the rear of the auditorium with the stage.

Actors often make entrances and exits on this device and occasionally perform short scenes there as well. Some kabuki plays use a second or temporary hanamachi down the aisle on the audience's opposite side. The stage is also well equipped with large and small elevator traps, used to lift actors in tableaux as well as spectacular settings, which come into view as the audience watches. There is even a small trap on the hanamachi that allows supernatural characters to emerge or disappear in the midst of the audience. The style of theatre, as well as the type of stage utilized, remains fairly constant within Japanese culture because of their strong traditional values and ancestral roots. English theatre, on the other hand, tends to

experience changes with time, ideology, and technology. As a general example, the predominant approach to acting in the 18th century was bombastic, emphasizing the performer's oratorical skills. Often, performers addressed their lines to the audience rather than the character to whom they were supposed to be speaking. Standardized patterns of stage movement were necessary because rehearsal time was limited, and bills were changed frequently.

This resulted from the industrial revolution and the economic boom which followed it, as the lower and middle classes who filled the fast-growing cities of industrialized Europe and America demanded theatre, which resulted in theatre becoming very popularized form of entertainment that attracted large numbers of spectators. The minstrel show, burlesque, variety, the circus, wild west shows, and medicine shows became popular in America, while concert halls, saloons, and playhouses presented collections of entertainments - including songs, dances, acrobatics, and animal acts - on one bill; these developed into the popular variety and vaudeville presentations at the turn of the century. In this instance, theatre was encouraged by a type of escapism practiced by the lower classes; to deal with the harsh life of factory work, they would escape their mundane lives through theatre, which provided hope for a better future.