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0521230144 - Naturalism and Symbolism in European Theatre 1850-1918

Edited by Claude Schumacher

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### Theatre in Europe: a documentary history

This is the fourth volume to be published in the series *Theatre in Europe: a documentary history*. This book charts the development of theatrical presentation at a time of great cultural and political upheaval. It is, for today's theatre practitioner, historian and theoretician, the most important period in the evolution of our art. The mid-nineteenth century witnessed the start of self-awareness and self-reflection among theatre artists. Putting on plays was no longer an end in itself, but the creation of imaginary worlds had to be justified on ethical, sociological and political as well as aesthetic grounds. The first great debate, which goes on to this day, especially in television, concerned the notion of realism/naturalism. It became more fascinating when artists, towards the end of the century, rebelled in the name of poetry before rejecting all conventions, in an assertion of total freedom of creation. Our documents chart the growth of naturalism throughout Europe and its gradual rejection and replacement by symbolism and expressionism. The second half of the nineteenth century saw also the assertion of the director (*metteur en scène*) and his unstoppable ascension, which resulted in the displacement of the star performer and the playwright.

For the first time in European theatre history, the training of actors – in schools or within professional companies (the 'ensemble') – mobilized the energies of the best practitioners. The documents show how in France, Germany, Russia and Scandinavia, directors, playwrights and theorists searched for more professional ways of staging plays with actors who had undergone a thorough technical training. The growing importance of sets and integrated set designs is also illustrated, alongside the new technologies (for example, electric lighting). Then, as now, the majority of actors were struggling to eke out a living and we reproduce some eye-opening contracts that were forced on would-be performers. Throughout the period, and in all countries, censorship prevented the free expression of ideas; rules and regulations were imposed which resulted in many a protracted battle opposing the authorities to playwrights and theatre directors. The period, 1850 to 1918, was, in theatrical terms, the most colourful, the most turbulent, and the most inspiring of our theatre history. It is also a period which still affects every aspect of play-making today. With few exceptions, our documents are unavailable to an English-reading public and many are out of print (or unpublished) in their original language. The volume contains numerous illustrations, the source location for each document and a substantial bibliography.

### Theatre in Europe: a documentary history

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## *General editors' preface*

In appointing appropriately qualified editors for all the volumes in this documentary history it has been our aim to provide a comprehensive collection of primary source materials for teachers and students on which their own critical appraisal of theatrical history and dramatic literature may safely be grounded.

Each volume presents primary source documents in English, or in English translation, relating to actors and acting, dramatic theory and criticism, theatre architecture, stage censorship, settings, costumes and audiences. Editors have, in general, confined their selection to documentary material in the strict sense (statutes, proclamations, inscriptions, contracts, working-drawings, playbills, prints, account books, etc.), but exceptions have been made in instances where prologues, epilogues, excerpts from play texts and private correspondence provide additional contemporary documentation based on authors' authority or that of eyewitnesses to particular performances and significant theatrical events.

Unfamiliar documents have been preferred to familiar ones, short ones to long ones; and among long ones recourse has been taken to excerpting for inclusion all passages which either oblige quotation by right of their own intrinsic importance or lead directly to a clearer understanding of other documents. In every instance, however, we have aimed to provide readers not only with the exact source and location of the original document, but with complementary lists of similar documents and of secondary sources offering previously printed transcripts.

Each volume is equipped with an introductory essay, and in some cases introductory sections to each chapter, designed to provide readers with the appropriate social background – religious, political, economic and aesthetic – as context for the documents selected; it also contains briefer linking commentaries on particular groups of documents and concludes with an extensive bibliography.

Within this general presentational framework, individual volumes will vary considerably in their format – greater emphasis having to be placed, for example, on documents of control in one volume than in another, or with dramatic theory and criticism figuring less prominently in some volumes than in others – if each volume is to be an accurate reflection of the widely divergent interests and concerns of different European countries at different stages of their historical

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development, and the equally sharp differences in the nature and quality of the surviving documents volume by volume.

Glynne Wickham (Chairman)  
Bristol University

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## *Editor's preface*

This volume has been fifteen long years in the making, and many a time one had the feeling that it would never reach completion. It was first entrusted to James Arnott, who, on his retirement, asked me to take over, promising that he would go on working on the project. Sadly, it was not long before I had to labour without his kind and expert advice as he died after having enjoyed only a year or two of a very busy retirement. To his memory, we dedicate this volume.

Two of the original section contributors left the project for personal reasons and new colleagues had to be recruited at a time when Laurence Senelick, Michael Patterson and Laura Richards had all but completed their work. To these three collaborators *extraordinaires* I owe an immense debt of gratitude: their expert contributions showed the way to the rest of the team and their diligence ensured the survival of the project.

We are all deeply grateful to Sarah Stanton and Glynne Wickham for their initial help and encouragement. We are most particularly indebted to John Northam and Victoria Cooper for their close reading of earlier drafts, their detailed and constructive criticism, and their generous support throughout.

We should like to thank the staff of the Bibliothèque historique de la Ville de Paris; the Archives de la Comédie-Française; the Archives nationales; the Bibliothèque de l'Arsenal; the Musée Carnavalet, all in Paris; the Teatervitenskapelig institutt, Universitetet i Bergen; Universitetetsbiblioteket, Oslo; Statens Teaterhøyskole, Oslo; the Strindberg Museum, Stockholm; Drottningholms Teatermuseum, Stockholm; the British Library; the Biblioteca Burcardo, Rome; Kathy Hale, Leela Meinertas, Barry Norman, Anne Rosher and Sarah Woodcock, the Theatre Museum, London; Jill Davis (Eliot College), Steve Holland (Library), Jim Styles and Spencer Scott (Photographic Unit), University of Kent at Canterbury.

I am more personally grateful to David Walker and Richard Hand for their help in translating many of the French documents. As for all other translations in each section they have been made by the given editors, unless otherwise stated.

Finally we want to express very special thanks to Helen Southall, our hawk-eyed copy-editor, for her patience and consummate skill in giving the volume such an immaculate look.