

NEWS

USITT

LETTER

ADMINISTRATION SUPPLEMENT

U. S. INSTITUTE FOR THEATRE TECHNOLOGY, INC. • 245 WEST 52nd STREET • NEW YORK, N. Y. 10019

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JULY 1967

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CONTENTS:

ETCETERA

CONTRIBUTORS TO THE JUNE ISSUE:

BIBLIOGRAPHY

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COMMITTEE NOTES:

The extra July edition of the SUPPLEMENT concerns itself mostly with a review of the March, April, May, and June Bibliography. We regret that the "Newspaper" section of the Bibliography only represents articles from VARIETY; material from other papers were lost in the mails.

The Committee for Theatre Administration is pleased to announce the names of several chairmen who will be active during 1967-68. T. Bruce Birkenhead remains as Vice Chairman of the Committee. Peter Phillips, Centenary College (Hackettstown, New Jersey) will be the Administration Committee Project Chairman for Regional Conference. Charles E. Scott, State University College (New Paltz, New York) is Project Chairman for the SUPPLEMENT bibliography. Details of the operation of these and other special project committees will be described in the September 1967 SUPPLEMENT.

James L. Nuckolls  
Chairman, Committee for  
Theatre Administration

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ETCETERA

#### VIRGIN ISLANDS CULTURAL CENTER

A. U. S. Caribbean community numbering only 25,000 in population is committed to building a million-dollar cultural center. Contracts amounting to \$265,000 have been let for the "first-phase" facility offering a 2,000-seat outdoor - indoor theatre scheduled for completion of October, 1967.

The initial supporting bank loan is \$120,000. Five Virgin-Island insular banks have guaranteed the initial funding which is based upon private subscription funds. Byron Case, Chairman of the U.S. Virgin Island Arts Council says: "There will be an appropriate charge for (the Center's) use, both to support maintenance of the project, and also because we believe people should work on a something-for something basis".

GREATER CANADA COUNCIL GRANTS \$122,600 TO THE ARTS - MAY 19 McMaster University received \$2,500 to bring distinguished speakers from England to another arts conference held under the auspices of the universities of Canada. An award of \$10,000 goes to the Banff School of Fine Arts to help provide an orchestra to accompany its summer opera and ballet productions on a tour of cities in Alberta, British Columbia and the State of Washington. The Canadian Theatre Center received a supplementary \$8,000 for special projects, including the preparation and publication of the Canadian Theatre Yearbook.

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BIBLIOGRAPHY

MAGAZINES

White, Melvin R., "Employment Opportunities in Theatre and Drama: Fact and Prophecy, "THE CENTRAL STATES SPEECH JOURNAL (February 1967), Vol. XVIII, No. 1:24-26.

Brief paragraphs cover the employment picture in commercial theatre, colleges and universities, elementary and secondary schools, and children's theatre.

NEWSLETTERS

"Cultural Whisper," AETA NEWSLETTER (June 1967).

"Cultural Boom is exaggerated, finds Twentieth Century Fund. Growth of regional theatres...and increased consumer expenditures on admissions only reflect growth in population and incomes."

NEWSPAPERS

NOTE: All articles are from VARIETY (New York City)  
Morse, Tom, "See Computer B. O. Coming," (March 22, 1967)

A detailed description of the systems proposed by Ticket Reservation System (TRS) and Ticketron. The computer ticketing systems are similar to Telemax, a reservation system now used by independent hotel owners.

Morse, Tom, "B'way Takes Wait-and-see Attitude on Computerized Box Office Idea; Will Manage, 'If Good for Theatre,'" (March 29, 1967).

None of the professional Broadway interests seem particularly anxious to push the system or to kill it.

"Ford Grant Cuts Guthrie Loss," (April 5, 1967)

The Tyrone Guthrie Theatre loss of \$170,377.00 during the 1966 season is cut to \$22,481 by a Ford Foundation grant. The loss is the largest deficit in the theatre's 4-year history. Audience attendance is down.

"Set Confab Next Week To Tout Computer B.O.; Pilot Setup by June?," (April 5, 1967).

Ticket Reservation System, a bidder for the automatic ticket system market, plans to have approximately 10 pilot sales centers set up by June 1967.

"Capacity Biz, Enthusiastic Riders, For Special New B'way Theatre Bus; Driver Not Fictional Character," (April 5, 1967)

Special New York City bus takes people from the East Side to the city's West Side theatre district. Columbia Records is financing a three-month tryout of the project which is expected to lose money. Drivers are pleasant and business has been good so far.

"Plan Floating Theatre On London Canal Barge," (April 12, 1967).

The country's first permanent home for children's theatre will be a floating, covered auditorium to seat 200. Morning and afternoon performances will be for children; evening shows are for adults. The project, with permanent mooring in London, is financed for \$140,000.00.

"Ypsilanti Theatre Lays Off This Year," (April 12, 1967).

There was a \$250,000 debt after last summer's repertory performances of two plays. Fund drive underway to find \$500,000 to pay off debts and underwrite 1968 season.

"Fantastics' Nearly 7 Years Old; Profit Now \$585,306 on 16 ½ Ante," (April 26, 1967).

Figures refer to the original, New York City, Off-Broadway production playing in a 151-seat house. Show currently has a 4,600-ticket advance. Note that there was only one profitable week out of the first 12 the show played when it opened.

"City Gives 35G Toward L.A.'s Park Shakespeare; Require Matching Coin," (April 26, 1967).

Los Angeles Parks and Recreation Commission gave ANTA control of the Shakespeare-in-the-park project if it can match the grant by July 1. ANTA will work through other producing groups.

"TG-ATS Plans 10-Play LA Subscription Sked; Say other Legit Helps," (May 3, 1967).

"There had been some concern that the opening of two new theatres at the (Los Angeles) Music Center might reduce the Guild Subscriptions." Not so, says Conrad S. Smith, Administrative director. Subscriptions up.

Morse, Tom, "New Legit Ticket Setup," (May 3, 1967).

In brief, the brokers in New York City would "buy tickets at the theatre box offices at the same price which they would charge the public." The ticket commission would be negotiated with the show's producer; higher commissions would stimulate sales for "off" shows. The idea is to discourage "ice" caused by high demand for set-price tickets. The plan was introduced by John F. Wharton, and it has the approval of the license commissioner.

"Endowment of Arts Passes the House," (May 3, 1967).

The National Endowment for the Arts will get "\$4,500,000 for general program of grants, \$2,000,000 for matching grants to state arts groups, and \$500,000 for matching grants to organizations."

"Campus Plays Big In West, Not East," (May 24, 1967)

A review of AETA's Directory of American College Theatre. "... Play productions of colleges in Eastern States win the patronage of the smallest percentage of the available audience, while campus theatres in the Western States attract much greater support."

Setlowe, Rich, "13 Productions in Four Months, San Francisco Repertory Clicks; Black Cloud: \$425,000 Deficit," (May 24, 1967).

Exceptional critical season marred by debt caused mainly by ACT's (American Conservatory Theatre) training program. San Francisco businessmen have guaranteed sum for the fall and spring seasons, but it is doubtful that they will continue to offer this sort of support.

"Met Opera Hopes Eastern Airlines' \$500,000 for Wagnerian Cycle Cues Donations by More U.S. Businesses," (May 24, 1967).

Four-year commitment to restage the complete four-work Ring Cycle. "Until recent years, corporations were reluctant to make handouts...., first fearing Internal Revenue veto, then adverse comment from shareholders. These hazards have not materialized.."

Landry, Robert J., "More Over-S.E.C.-ing of B'way," (May 24, 1967)

Action by Fred Morrith against the Robert and Elizabeth company concerning U. S. presentation rights of the British play results in an unique request for hearing before the Securities and Exchange Commission. The matter may result in further S.E.C. "protection" for the theatre investor and additional cash-getting headaches.

"Going Ahead On Computer Setup," (June 7, 1967).

Ticketron hopes to be in operation by January 1967. There is still resistance from Broadway people. Ticketron will bypass Broadway with its computerized ticket reservation system if it has to. The company will concentrate on other ticketing groups, including cultural centers, regional theatres, college and university legits, sports attractions, reserved-ticket movies, etc.

"Northwest Businessmen Back Joffre Troupe's Visit; More Next Year," (June 7, 1967).

Business and cultural leaders band together to form the Northwest Ballet Association which will provide a summer tour for the Joffre company. Another NY company, the New York City Ballet, goes to Saratoga for the summer.

Morrison, Hobe, "B'way & Road B.O. Both Rise," (June 7, 1967).

Increase in gross totals of income reflects continued rise in ticket prices rather than greater attendance.

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# BROADWAY ANSWERS STICKS

## ALEX COHEN ON THEIR DEFICITS

By ROBERT J. LANDRY

A propaganda clash flared anew between U.S. "regional" (stock and repertory) theatres and Broadway's legitimate system during a symposium on "Wanted: Managers" conducted last Friday morning (2) at Manhattan's Huntington Hartford Gallery auditorium by the U.S. Institute of Theatre Technology. The quarrel is not new but it is durable. In effect, it was a pitting of "our artsy ideals in the sticks versus your crass profit-seeking on Broadway."

The defense of the Broadway commercial theatre was eloquently made by producer Alexander H. Cohen. He derided the superior ethics of local resident showmen who are always exceeding their own annual deficits. It was rare indeed that an experienced Broadway producer resorted to overcall. The showmen of B'way are not infallible in their reading of public taste but they do generally ring up their curtain to the minute and stay within budget. Only 5% in recent years had not. The fiascos which are publicized are generally by newcomer and amateur Broadway producers.

Leonard Edelstein, p.r. director of the Festival of Ithaca, N.Y., opened the slurring of Broadway by implying that it was without intellectual substance but instead presented "pseudo-events" with topical gimmicks to draw the sensation-seekers. Truly "serious theatre" survived in the outlying resident companies.

During the running argument one amusing quip emerged. Namely, Bertolt Brecht's "Mother Courage" was the regional theatres' repeated standby equivalent of the commercial operators' "Mary, Mary" of Jean Kerr.

Cohen averred that the artsy-craftsy regional operators ignored the record. Their stock-in-trade authors, Eugene O'Neill, Tennessee Williams, William Inge, Arthur Miller, Harold Pinter were all introduced and launched by commercial managements on Broadway.

It was true that inflation economics and the stay-at-home habits of the television age diminished the size of the Broadway production seasons, and that flops outnumbered hits by a large ratio, but given the realities with which they deal, Cohen thought Broadway's regular, active producing managers made a far better case for giving the public exceptional plays and paying their way. Broadway did not pass the hat or ask for a license to bore its audience.

Robert C. Schnitzer, executive director of the Professional Theatre Program at the U. of Michigan, deplored warfare between the two kinds of theatre. There was need for both, and a place for both in the pluralistic society of America. Britain provided the model and avoided the senseless "feud" and debate over motives and means.

### Won't Work That Hard

Cohen had obviously shocked some of the audience of theatre technicians, architects and professors by his blunt statement that Broadway could possibly hire half a dozen more able general managers, but no more. Fact was, said he, that most applicants for such jobs simply would not tolerate the hours and other demands of the work. Long apprenticeships necessary to qualify were also not popular in the present era of instant success.

The morning session seemed to point up that what Broadway meant by a house manager or general manager differed markedly from titles as applied to regional theatres or cultural complexes. The latter legit needs an "administrator," which function implied skilled subscription-ticket installation and/or donation solicitation.

One speaker referred to such an "administrator" as needing to possess the traits of (a) enjoying people, (b) loving all the arts, (c) being a student of community structure, and with this (d) a lot of self-effacement, presumably so as not to draw personal fire.

That the regional theatres are also beset with anguish was evident. There was oblique allusion to the social-tea side of operating regionally, the difficulties of maintaining rapport with local social and cultural leaders.

The phrase "hand-to-mouth grants" was used. That was the everyday gruesome truth. Against it the ideal would be a regional theatre living off the interest of a large endowment, thereby free of the compromises of play choice, the fear of new works, hard-to-understand dramatists, and so on.

### Papp's Area

Joseph Papp, the Central Park friend of the Bard, occupied his own special niche in modern theatre, since he is consciously appealing to the people who would presumably not otherwise be brought into the spoken drama audience at all. His own economic methods were unique, in that he pays above minima wages to actors although depending wholly on donations. But Papp is not "half-boxoffice" and "half-gift" in policy, as with most of the regional situations. That Papp presently has some 285 persons on payroll was a sufficiently astonishing bit of data. His own credo was that the legit necessarily wins selected, not universal audiences and that it is wiser to accept that basis. The spoken drama cannot compete with tv and screen. It must find its own place and following.

Campus theatre operation has an obligation to stay within budget, too, Schnitzer intruded at one point to say, he making facetious reference to academic bursars as showing warmth in their glass eye.

### Lag Midst Affluence

There was perhaps one area of agreement between Broadway commercial and regional artsy theatre: the live drama form was not today in any way even with the expanding economy of the U.S. Both were inclined to accept the truism that millions of Americans never go to any kind of theatre (including films) and instead lounge in easy chairs at home guzzling beer and watching the idiot box.

Some interesting sidelights on college and university instructional positions via-a-vis the training of theatre managers were revealed during the meeting, over which T. Bruce Birkenhead of Brooklyn College presided. In general there were only a few courses already organized. Qualified teachers for them are a palpable difficulty. As Schnitzer himself stated two or three apprentices at his Michigan operation would learn much but, at the end, would emerge only ready to begin a true apprenticeship in the profession. One speaker stated that Trinity College in Connecticut was pondering possible establishment of a course in theatre management (three years).

Panelists also included George C. White of the O'Neill Foundation, Nicholas E. Bedessem of the National Foundation of the Arts and Harold Oakes of Kearney College in Nebraska.

USITT COMMITTEE FOR THEATRE ADMINISTRATION

REGIONAL NEWS REPORT FORM

Enclosed are the following materials:

( ) Newspaper Article

Newspaper \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_ - \_\_\_\_ -66.      Volume \_\_\_\_\_ Number \_\_\_\_\_

Page number(s) \_\_\_\_\_

( ) Other Publications (magazine, pamphlets, etc. )

Publication name \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_ - \_\_\_\_ -66.      Volume \_\_\_\_\_ Number \_\_\_\_\_ Page \_\_\_\_\_

( ) Check here if the article is to be returned.

ADDITIONAL NOTES OR COMMENTS:

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