



**Plate 15** Piscator standing under stage lights.

part 2

## The Notebook

The classes at which these notes were taken were focused on the training that Erwin Piscator and his teachers were able to convey, which meant that it spanned the enormous gaps between the methods of Stella Adler, Lee Strasberg, Raikin Ben-Ari, Herbert Bergof, Maria Ley-Piscator, and Piscator himself.

These classes did not represent a method or a "school," but strengthened the actor, not only in body and voice, but in the deepest attitude of his or her artistic self, her commitment, her larger vision, her sensibility. This strength could then be applied in the one hundred thousand ways of the artist – each one unique – but trained to offer their unique input to the collective work.

Each of us knew that what we were learning was not only the fulfillment of our potential. It was also the way that this fulfillment could – indeed must – fulfill the needs and largest capacities of the whole company, of the play, and of the audience, which was our motive for doing the play.

**Monday, February 5, 1945**

On my first day as a student of the theatre I had the rare experience of meeting a great man. When Erwin Piscator entered the room it was not the spontaneous applause of my fellow students alone that I felt, but the tangible presence of a personality. He welcomed us with an informal introductory speech about the artistic and political power of the theatre. His love for the art came across to me in the form of a high constructive enthusiasm, and I assume it was the same for those around me. He said that the great revolutions were often inspired by plays of high impact, like *Uncle Tom's Cabin* or Hauptmann's *The Weavers*. His informality, combined with the fire and power of his ideas, led to him making the half-joking statement which I am tempted to use as my motto: "The theatre is the most important thing, and anyone who does not realize this is stupid."

After this and other speeches by our teachers-to-be, we all had lunch together as an opportunity to make acquaintance, since Mr. Piscator emphasizes the importance of actors knowing each other well in order to create harmoniously. At the dinner, several of the older students made impromptu speeches and even did little imitations and skits. It was not the quality of these but the straightforward, facing-the-audience atmosphere that I noted. A certain poise, a preparedness, has come to these young people through their training that seems truly remarkable to one as stage-frightened as myself.

Afternoon brought my first class, a stage make-up class about using the right materials and tools. Our teacher, Leo Kerz, is a quiet, intelligent young man whom I fear will be quite hard to know. A benign, knowing dignity puts up a teacher-pupil barrier here. I shall try to overcome it. In the short lecture, the teacher stressed the necessity of the actor's skill in the uses of make-up on stage, which are three: 1) the preservation of one's own features and personality which the artificial conditions and lighting of the stage alter considerably and blur still more, 2) characterization, which involves actual facial changes or particular accentuation and 3) stylization for certain types of plays.

Our second class was called Current Broadway Plays. We are supposed to be the enemies of the commercial theatre, but no one spoke of it as critically as I thought they should. Broadway, its lack of standards, of artistic integrity, of theatre in Mr. Piscator's sense of the word, was not under discussion. Mr. Piscator believes that it is important that we understand

what the other side is doing. The teacher, Alexander Ince, himself a Broadway producer, gave us some insights into the difficulties of obtaining movie rights, and the division of money whose source is such a transaction, which seemed more like the Broadway small talk to which I was accustomed when I was making the rounds. It did not surprise me when he said his office was in the Sardi's Building.

After this discussion some of the older students read, quite cold, the script of a new play, and an interesting one, concerning a woman of five facets – the poetic one, the mother, the bitch, the drudge, and the club woman. All were admirably played by young girls who entered into the spirit of their parts and the play immediately, and fitted their characterizations to the role. Virginia Baker as the bitch was especially effective and, though overplaying it, still managed the subtlety of the nuances.

This class was followed by a class in stagecraft, a completely new facet of the theatre for me. Though I have always been awed by its complexities, I had never before thought of mastering it. The class started in the last semester and we entered in the middle of the course, but the material was so well explained by the teacher, Mr. Hans Sondheimer, that I followed easily. The class was on stage curtains, a subject not fully covered in two hours. I have been aware of curtains, but never of the intricacies connected with them. Technically, I have never been highly accomplished, but I have great respect for the importance of this course, the importance of a sailor knowing his ship, an actor knowing his stage.

At our last class of the day I was already a bit tired, for our work day involved 12 full hours and by 8:30 I was bewildered by so many new ideas and people.

But the last class was Mr. Piscator's directing class and I am ardent to take what I can of Mr. Piscator's ideas and make them my own. He spoke of the creativity of the director's role, of its recognition in Hollywood, though not at all in such companies as the Comédie Française or the Metropolitan Opera. He compares the theatrical director with the musical conductor and the director's book with the score. Then he spoke at length of the importance of the director's book. The first version of the director's book, he suggested, should be in the form of a novel: a story of environment and actions and thoughts on the play. And the second version should be a mechanical book of directions, that should later become the stage manager's book. Mr. Piscator then asked the class what would be their first step in staging a play. One student caused laughter with his answer,

“Read the play,” but Mr. Piscator agreed with him, pointing out that most directors do not read plays correctly.

He even went so far as to tell of his own experience in misjudging a play which he finally realized was meritorious only after reading it ten times. Here a student interposed that when he read a play he knew it was either good or bad, and when it did not appeal to him he did not even finish reading it. Mr. Piscator said that this was a perfect example of a lack of the ability to read a play. We then discussed the proper attitude toward a new play from the director’s point of view. After reading a play, we should attempt to assimilate it and feel it from the inside; then we must visualize certain scenes, and let certain characters take shape, till finally we come to the analysis of plot and character, breaking down the play into its elements. With this class our day ended. The fullest day of my life, confirming the general impression that “The theatre is the most important thing.”

## Tuesday, February 6, 1945

My first class was Mr. Piscator’s Theatre Research, the aim of which is to establish a philosophy of the theatre. Actually a class in criticism, Mr. Piscator explained that criticism is a noble art practiced by Aristotle and Lessing and not the ignoble thing practiced by the newspaper reviewers of our day. Criticism is not merely positive or negative judgment as expressed yesterday by the young man who “either liked a play or didn’t like a play on first reading or seeing it, and that’s all there is to it,” but something far more objective. To criticize we must first learn to think dialectically, we must learn Hegelian thinking. For we are all prejudiced, whether by wealth or poverty, or our bourgeois heritage – whether by culture, or by being part of a minority or part of a majority. The influence of our environment is present and shows itself in our judgment. It is only when we can sever our prejudices “and thus our beliefs from our judgment that, we are criticizing justly.”

He went on to speak of what constitutes the theatre, saying that the audience is an integral part of the play. Here Piscator breaks with Stanislavsky. For Piscator feels that the audience should not just be taken into consideration by the actor, but actually be made the confidante of the actor, whereas Stanislavsky’s method is a way of entering into the part

and forgetting the audience. Mr. Piscator feels that the ideal theatre would be one in which the play took place before an audience seated at little desks, who were permitted to interrupt to ask for the repetition of a word, or ask the meaning of a phrase at will. I would not like to act in Mr. Piscator’s ideal theatre. Perhaps in two years I shall feel differently.

Mr. Piscator does not admit “outside effects” which he classes as entertainment. Here he criticized the Broadway theatre saying it worked entirely for outside effects, until it now has become a superficial style. He ended the lecture by declaring that religion, which once unified human life and gave us higher-than-materialistic ideals, is losing its power more and more as a community bond. Here art enters, and here theatre enters, to give the strength and beauty to our world that religion gave to the medieval world.

My second class was a March of Drama class in which the older students discussed *Nathan the Wise* for a future production. In the reading Miss Virginia Baker once again showed herself a master of her art.

Then, before a solemn assembly of Mr. and Mrs. Piscator, Mr. Raikin Ben-Ari, Miss Chouteau Dyer, and the other teachers, Mr. Piscator called on us to repeat our auditions. He said it was a good way for the old students to get acquainted with the new class. Repeat my audition?! And in the presence of my new schoolmates! I was terrified again. Still, I thought it would be fun to show off my bizarre, expressionist piece in contrast to their conventional auditions. I admired their monologues from O’Neill, Arthur Miller and Chekhov. There were two exceptional performances – an emotional scene by a young lady named Arla Gild, and a fine reading of Edmond’s “bastard speech” from *King Lear*.

Then it was my turn. Mr. Piscator had warned the other students not to “perform” so much, so I started with slight misgivings, but then I threw my body gingerly across the room and slid my foot along the polished floor of the dance studio and cried out sharp and hard,

“My foot upon the moon . . .”

And falling forward, I enacted the claustrophobic nightmare with voice and body.

After each audition, Mr. Piscator challenged the student. His questions were brusque: “Why do you want to be an actor?”

“What have you got to say, that you want to stand up and make everyone listen to you?”

“What do you think you can accomplish with your work?”

"What are your politics?" He was bold and asked outright. He told us in his teacherly, directorial manner: "You have no right to stand up in front of the public, to stand in the center, to stand in the light and demand their attention because you speak so well, or because you look so beautiful, or because you move so gracefully, or because you can make them laugh, or make them cry. You can only demand their attention if you have something that you are burning to communicate." Since my scene was one of the last, I had time to prepare my response to Mr. Piscator's challenges.

"I am a pacifist!" I said, feeling sure that this would answer all Piscator's demands. "So am I," he answered, rather dismissively. "But what kind of pacifism do you imagine in a world at war? What kind of society can you suggest that would be a peaceful society? How would you regulate life, food, work and water in a pacifist world?"

I was startled. "I . . . don't know . . ." I said, feeling as humbled as Piscator once did in the trenches at Ypres, when he said he was an actor

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"This is what I have to study," I said, brazening it out.

And so I will, along with my study of the dramatic arts, study the answers to Mr. Piscator's questions.

Mr. Piscator said he liked my poem, which he applauded, though he did not comment further.

We then met a group of actors from The Hedgerow Theatre, including their inspired director, Mr. Jasper Deeter. He founded the Hedgerow in 1923, making it the oldest repertory company in the United States. The Hedgerow is a "little theatre" group, but Mr. Piscator says, the "little" theatres here should be called the "great" theatres and the Broadway theatres should be called the "little" theatres. The Hedgerow then is a "great" theatre, with high idealistic standards from which, according to the introduction their representative gives, they do not stray. It has been in existence for 20 years, never a financial or critical success, but always an integral group, living together and working in complete unity. An admirable enterprise, if their productions are on as high a level as their standards.

Our last class of the day was Stage Design with Mr. Leo Kerz. He said that one of the great errors of the theatre was "judging new methods by old standards." Justifying the inclusion of a stage design course in an acting course, Mr. Kerz attempted to show that the difference between the old and the new drama is that the old consisted of action and character, whereas the new is compounded of action, character and setting. Setting

including the sense of time, environment, the influence of the period, political and other factors. The where and why must be shown by "circumstantial evidence." A Greek or Shakespearean play can be done in modern clothes. Hamlet and Juliet can be given contemporary significance, but you cannot do *Awake and Sing* or *Street Scene* in classical costumes. The modern theatre has added a visual dimension to our auditory art.

Stage Design had its origin in the same impulse that changed the actor from a masked, stilted orator to a real person living through real experiences on the stage. Here a discussion ensued on the merits and demerits of Wilde, Shaw and Shakespeare, and the difference between good plays and good literature, which was found to be considerable.

### Wednesday, February 7, 1945

My first class was in Dance Movement with Maria Ley-Piscator. She begins with breathing. She asked us to chase our breath to our spine and our sides, all of which was a little beyond my understanding. The *barre* work, *pliés* from positions 1, 2, 3, 5 and some foot movements, were simple enough and wonderfully stimulating. Madame Piscator explained the importance of dance movement for the stage, of relaxation as taught in modern dance, and control as taught in ballet, both of which are necessary to the actor – so that we shall make use of both. She showed how tension was displayed in raised shoulders and how lowering the shoulders was a good method of overcoming tenseness on the stage. Demonstrating the differences between an inside movement and an outside movement, she showed us how the latter grows up and out against gravity. A person should grow out of their hips freely and elastically like a flower from its cup, and not "sit in their bodies" as in old age. The energy center is in the solar plexus, the center of our body, and not our hips or arms or hands, and all movements should begin there (shades of Isadora Duncan). We ended the class with some arm movements and bending exercises. All of which was enough to give me a pleasant, though painful stiffness. She explains her points clearly, and I think I shall advance well in this class.

We then had an orientation class in Pantomime, in which Mr. Ben-Ari asked for improvisations. Mr. Ben-Ari, formerly of Moscow and the Habima, and still a great worshipper of Stanislavsky, explained the meaning of sense memory. He asked the girls to enter a room from a storm, to

warm themselves and take their coats off. At first none of us did well. Mr. Ben-Ari's suggestions helped us to become more realistic – how to remember the cold, to allow ourselves to really feel it . . .

Mr. Piscator had asked that the new acting students not take the directing course without having had former directing experience. Stubborn and over-ambitious as usual, I went to his office to ask to be permitted to take the directing class. Piscator looked at me coldly. He does not have a high regard for the staying power of women in “the masculine professions”. I pleaded with him, swallowing my humiliation at his low opinion of my qualifications because of my gender, as well as his low regard for actresses, and he somewhat reluctantly allowed me to take the directing course. His reluctance to admit me to his course means that I must work all the harder, catch up on the reading, and at the same time, keep a high standard in my acting work. But it also assures me that I will be able to study not only acting, but stage design, theatre management, lighting, and above all, take invaluable directing classes with Piscator.

Chouteau Dyer, Mr. Piscator's assistant, took the aspiring directors to a conference room where we were all – myself most of all – frightened at the prospect of entering an advanced class in the middle of the term. Directing students are asked to actually plan and execute a production for the Friday March of Drama. The standard of those productions which I have seen thus far is well above my ability but it may be that, when I get over the awe of it, I too shall reach that point of daring to direct a production.

After class I bought the book, *Fundamentals of Play Directing* by Alexander Dean, which is used in Mr. Piscator's class. There is so much to read, even to catch up with the class.

At 8:30 I entered Dr. Paul Zucker's class on Styles Through the Ages. I had been forewarned that Dr. Zucker was “the most learned man in the whole world,” and his class made me regret the grain of salt with which I had taken that statement. Dr. Zucker did not speak about the theatre, but it is wonderful that The Dramatic Workshop had the insight to ask drama students to take a course by an historian of the arts to study periods rather than productions and personalities. Starting the new semester with the Renaissance, Dr. Zucker explained that the Renaissance form of expression was painting, just as in Elizabethan times it was drama, in Roman times, architecture, and in modern times, the novel. Raphael and Da Vinci were most expressive of Renaissance style, though a man

can be great in his time without being of his time. Brahms wrote in the 19th century, but his music expressed the style of Brahms and not of the 19th century. Mozart, who wrote in the 18th century, expresses the style of his century perfectly and reflects it in his music.

Dr. Zucker then presented slides. He began with a primitive Byzantine mosaic of *The Last Supper*, and showed how the times and styles influenced the development of this theme, leading to the epitome of achievement in Da Vinci's masterpiece. He showed us anatomical and architectural and scientific studies by this versatile genius of the Renaissance. Then he showed us Raphael's Madonnas, from the very earthy mother of *Madonna of the Chair* to the exalted *Sistine Madonna*. An interesting example of Renaissance style was shown in Raphael's *Betrothal of the Virgin*, and a painting of the same name by Raphael's teacher, Perugino. The ideal building of the Renaissance forms the background of both these pictures. This ideal building was constructed so as to appear equal from any side and from any entry. Doors and arches were built symmetrically. This lecture with slides was the last class of the day.

#### Thursday, February 8, 1945

My first class this morning was a voice class with a young woman, Miss Gloria Montemuro. After listening to the speech of several students, Miss Montemuro discussed with each his or her individual speech problems. She told me that I needed a great deal of work in breath control, of which I am, of course, aware, but she also asked me to put more voice behind my final “m's” and “n's” to prevent nasalizing. I see no point to this whatever in my case. Then she said that I over-aspirate my vowels in words like “stop.” I don't want to differ with my teachers, especially in fields they know best, but the sheer ugliness of drawing out an “m” or “n” and the undervaluation of a final aspirate are not, to my mind, desirable speech characteristics. Meanwhile, I must content myself with chasing my breath about my insides. It seems I have been breathing like a fool all my life, and now must breathe with my diaphragm (located where I always thought my stomach was), instead of just taking in air at random, unintelligently. During the rest of the class I was desperately trying to read the second half of *Faust*, which I must finish by Friday for my March of Drama class.

My next class was an orientation class in which we chose our technical courses. I asked to take Stage Design and Costume Design – hoping my experience in designing jewelry may prove helpful when applied to theatre. During the interviews of the students I read some *Faust*.

Then we heard another lecture by the brilliant Dr. Zucker. This course is called History and Sociology of the Theatre. The first lecture was on the ancient theatre. Dr. Zucker explained that the Greek Drama began in magic cults and religious rites. There were gods who needed to be placated, and the chorus moving about in front of the temple was intended to pacify the gods. Eventually, a dialogue between a protagonist and a Choragos was introduced. The protagonist was a questioner who carried on a dialogue with the chorus. This was the first actor.

The second actor was not present until much later, at the time of Aeschylus (525–456 B.C.E.), and the third actor was introduced by Sophocles. Dr. Zucker showed how those who created the very means of the theatre reached poetic heights never surpassed by any playwright in later times.

Dr. Zucker then showed slides of the development of the Greek amphitheatre, from a semi-circle in front of a Dionysian temple to the ornate Roman two-story columned theatre, like the one at Orange in France. He also showed us masks from both the tragedies and the satires, with their unique megaphone mouthpieces. The Greeks, whose theatre sprung up, original, uninfluenced and unadulterated, reached a technical perfection that is superior in its way to ours.

Our last class of the day was Costume Design, with Mr. Kerz. He will trace the history of costume, starting with Egypt. We discussed the difference between costume and clothing. Costume is the decorative endeavor in dress. He pointed out the lack of utility in our contemporary clothing. This was highly contested, but of course, it is true. It is precisely the point of Ad Reinhardt's current exhibit at the Museum of Modern Art, "Are Clothes Modern?" Clothes, even today, are governed by convention, taboo, and primitive urges. Mr. Kerz asked us to read something on Egyptian civilization so that we may correlate it with his next lecture.

### Friday, February 9, 1945

This morning we had our first acting class with Mr. Ben-Ari. Stanislavsky's books, *My Life in Art* and *An Actor Prepares* didn't seem to me to be the

## 203 HISTORY AND SOCIOLOGY OF THE THEATRE

15 weeks, fall and spring. Tuesdays 8.30–10.15 P.M. \$20.00 Paul Zucker  
Illustrated by lantern slides

### THE ELEMENTS

(Fall term, beginning October 8)

The stage of today is viewed as the most recent step in a historical development, and the aim of the course is to find the most appropriate and effective means of expression for our own day. With this in mind, the sociology of the audience in various periods is analyzed, its influence on the theatre set up, types of actor, form of the stage, scenic techniques etc., showing how each age found its own scenic expression in terms of contemporary culture.

- I **The Actor 1.** Psychology, physique, character, their influence on the concept of the role and the interpretation of the play.
- II **The Actor 2.** Basic types, artistic limits: casting. The various possibilities of expression. Individual actor and ensemble play.
- III **The Audience 1.** Sociological differences and the variety of theoretical interests, common reactions.
- IV **The Audience 2.** In various historical periods: their influence on the form of dramatic literature.
- V **Sociology of the American Theatre today.** Broadway, community, college theatre, summer stock. Experimental theatre. Box office, entertainment, literature.
- VI **Artistic means of the stage through the ages:** word, gesture, setting.
- VII **Styles of Representation 1.** Realism and Naturalism.
- VIII **Styles of Representation 2.** Symbolism, various aspects of stylization, abstraction, condensation, their technical means.
- IX **Function of color and light:** realistic and symbolical meaning. Psychology of perception.
- X **Form and space on the stage.** Perspective, dimension, scale. Levels.
- XI **Costume and setting.** Archaeological faithfulness vs. artistic truth.
- XII **Tools of the stage.** Props, scenery, wings, backdrop, the closed wall, turntable, treadmill, projections.
- XIII **Theatre and movie 1.** Differences of art forms and of perception.
- XIV **Theatre and movie 2.** Difference of artistic means.
- XV **Conclusions.**

## HISTORY OF THE THEATRE

(Spring term, beginning February 4)

- I The roots.** Children's play, disguise, the mask. Ceremonial. Magic and the Mime.
- II Greek theatre.** Dialogue and function of the chorus. The form of the stage. The beginning of dramaturgy.
- III Roman theatre.** The machinery. Pantomimes.
- IV Mysteries and Passion Plays.** Miracles and Moralities of the Middle Ages. The liturgical origin.
- V The theatre of the Renaissance.** Intermezzi and trionfi.
- VI The Commedia dell'Arte.** Farce. Eternal types; costumes.
- VII The Shakespearean stage and the stage of the Restoration.** Inigo Jones.
- VIII Opera, its history and aesthetics.** Specific needs of the opera stage, based on the integration of action, music and set.
- IX Dance and ballet.** Their specific art forms.
- X The Baroque theatre on the international scene.** Illusion and machinery. **The great stage designers.** From Furttentbach to the Bibienas. The influence of the theatre of the Jesuits.
- XI The theatre of the 19th century.** Classicism and Romanticism. The academic style. The "Meininger." The beginnings of Naturalism.
- XII Naturalism and the history of the naturalistic theatre.** From 1890 through today.
- XIII The revolution of the modern stage,** through Gordon Craig and Adolphe Appia.
- XIV The experimental theatre of today.** Influence of the Russian stage.
- XV The Epic Theatre.** Erwin Piscator.

Figure 1 Lecture Program for History and Sociology of the Theatre, Fall term and Spring term, taught by Paul Zucker.

beacon lights of acting when I read them three years ago. But Mr. Ben-Ari's application of Stanislavsky's principles is a fascinating and instructive experiment. Mr. Ben-Ari asked us to talk about our acting problems, and offered us hope that none of them are insurmountable. He then asked Barbara Sisson to read us an article from *Theatre Workshop* magazine by the great Italian actor, Tomasso Salvini, entitled "Studying My Art."

Salvini wrote that he began by studying the classics, from which he learned style and poetic grandeur, and gained an acquaintance with the great figures of all ages. He also studied love and hate, desire and vengeance, kindness, cruelty and all the other human passions, good and evil, and learned to note and to remember the manners, movements and expressions connected with each. He studied people and history so that he could, when called upon, create a fictional character or play an historical figure, giving each a distinct personality. The article ended ". . . and then study and study, always study." This, Mr. Ben-Ari said, should serve us as an actor's bible.

We discussed justification, taking the art of listening as an example. The wide-eyed cocking of the head is not necessary, to genuinely listen is far more effective. In real life, we look without seeing and listen without hearing. We were asked to be very still and listen. When, somewhere in another room, a tapping sounded, no one could count the number of taps accurately. Then Mr. Ben-Ari asked us to speak and listen simultaneously. Since we were concentrating on listening, we all spoke slowly and in low tones. But when Mr. Ben-Ari told us that in the next room our dear friends and teachers lay dead, our quiet speech took on a meaning and our listening became real. This is what he calls "motivation."

In a lesson on observation, we each described an object we saw on stage without looking at it. Mr. Ben-Ari explained that these physical descriptions would be very different if the object had a personal meaning. If, for instance, the table we were describing had a murderer's gun on it, or if we were trying to buy it or to sell it . . . Here again, motivation supplies meaning to our words or actions. When we illustrate them in these exercises, the ideas of Constantin Stanislavsky are stupendous.

Our next class was an acting class with a *charmante* European actress, Miss Margrit Wyler, who has played both classics and roles that feature her very evident sex appeal. Whereas Mr. Ben-Ari teaches improvisation, Miss Wyler will teach us acting from scripts. Today she asked us to repeat our auditions, which she criticized and improved markedly. She teaches less from the theoretical side and more from the actor's experience. She asked me not to repeat my audition as she said it was rather "polished," but next lesson I will probably get a chance to read. I am sure I shall learn much from this vivacious lady.

The afternoon session of The March of Drama was the final rehearsal of *Faust*. I said that I had read the play (though that was years ago), and

Miss Dyer asked me to retell the story. I was not doing too badly with my memory, when Mr. Piscator entered, and I suddenly regretted that I had not finished rereading the play. He did not interrupt me, so that in front of Piscator, who had acted in and directed *Faust*, and who knew it practically by heart, I had to tell the story that I had not read in years. That I got away with it I must consider the height of successful bluffing. But I shall read it tonight and tomorrow, so as to never have to face such a situation again.

Esther Nighbert then told us about the production of *Faust* which she directed for tonight's March of Drama. She presented heaven with Eugene Van Grona playing an endearing Mephisto, and then the pact scene with Bob Carricart, a young but energetic Faust. The Garden scene had a vaudeville version of Mephistopheles to which Mr. Piscator objected, and in spite of the good performance by the girl who played Martha, Mr. Piscator asked that the scene be omitted this evening. Then, as Esther Nighbert put it, going from the ridiculous to the sublime, the Dungeon scene, with Virginia Baker as the unfortunate Gretchen. She and Bob Carricart did the grim scene with dash and power. The scene between Mephisto and the young student was presented as an allegory of The Dramatic Workshop. The student, like myself, "wants to specialize in everything."

In the evening, Mr. Gassner's lecture on Goethe and the Romantic movement showed how it corresponded in time with the revolutionary movements, and was a phase of these movements. The Romantics were interested in the individual, in the unlimited horizons of mankind, and man's scope. Also, in the form of the writing, the Romantic wants complete freedom. In *Faust*, Goethe fulfilled both of these Romantic ideals, although he denied that he belonged to the Romantic movement, preferring the classical style to Romanticism. His *Faust* is the story of man's ascent to grandeur, his search and striving and his successful attainment of spiritual happiness – "to see a free people, upon a free soil" – which is the epitome of the revolutionist aspiration. In form as well, *Faust* is rambling, free of the unities of time, place and action. The performance was prefaced by Miss Dyer's reading of a short essay of Goethe's on dilettantism. Now to prepare a critique of the performances for the Theatre Research class on Tuesday morning.

**Tuesday, February 13, 1945**

Directors' Council, with many fears that I shall not be able to accomplish what is asked of me. I am given two positions. I assist the Stage Manager in *Nathan the Wise* and assist on costumes in Molière's *Imaginary Invalid*.

My next class was in Theatre Research, with *Cher Maître* again. Discussing the last production, *The Vultures* by Henri Becque, all the actors stated that they did not like the play. Mr. Piscator said this was foolishness. Charles Zimmermann played the chief Vulture, M. Tessier. He said he disliked the part at first, and could not find a way to play it. Then he decided to walk through it to see whether it could be approached physically. He found himself in a hunched position. In that attitude, he realized the whole being of M. Tessier and from this core created the role, quite successfully. Mr. Piscator said that here is an example of finding a role through posture, which he normally considered a superficial element. Elaine Stritch, who played the Mother, said that she liked neither the part nor the play. Priscilla Draghi, who was very convincing as Blanche, said that Blanche's attitude was hard for a modern girl to believe.

A discussion ensued in which the men felt that a girl would behave in this fashion, and the girls protested that a modern girl would either fight or give up the young man of her own free will. Louis Guss, who played the Father, said that he could not feel any intimate family relation with the rest of the cast. Another student told a relevant story concerning the Group Theatre. Once Morris Carnovsky could not feel that the cast was his family until it occurred to him that he had acted with this same group for years, and they *were* his family! Louis could have assumed the same attitude. He also mentioned that he did not feel at home on the set, whereas in *Hannele's Way to Heaven*, he had. Mr. Piscator asked if he remembered how he achieved this feeling. Louis explained that he walked on the set alone among the props, until he believed it.

A student then read his critique of *Faust*, noteworthy for its clarity and also its complications. The student spoke of Goethe intelligently, but perhaps too intellectually. He was hypercritical of the production, which he felt should never have been attempted, but which I thought was excellent, given the limitations of a school production. He found Eugene's Mephistopheles reminiscent of a French barber. A much more favorable critique was read by David, who has worked here longer and knows the school better. After these bursts of analytical expression, I hesitated to

for a very old person but for a woman about 42 and rather well-preserved. The result, with Barbara using brown liner and myself using grey liner was that, as Mr. Kerz put it, she looked "as though she had missed a few hour's sleep," and I looked "degenerate, haggard and emaciated," which was perfectly true. Barbara's face retained her freshness and her youth, while I looked like a very sloppy prostitute of indefinite age. I shall try it with brown liner next week.

In Current Plays we read further in *Margret*, the girl with five distinct personalities. Last week the authors of the play, Sterling North and Yasha Frank, were in class and we read for them. I read the role of The Drudge. The authors were impressed with Virginia's rendition of The Bitch, which she does to perfection.

But today we read among ourselves, and I took the part of The Clubwoman, and could not quite give it the sense of "lording it" that Harriet Charney had. I read a little too clipped and hard. It is rather a difficult part for me but . . . *Humani nihil a me alienum puto.*

In my evening directing class, Mr. Piscator discussed and illustrated counterfocus. Counterfocus is emphasis achieved indirectly through an emphasized figure. In other words, x, y and z are looking at A, but A is looking at B. B is emphasized more by x-y-z's indirect focus than by A alone. We illustrated this with several examples from Alexander Dean. We then did a scene from the archives, that is, from recent March of Drama productions, choosing Strindberg's *Bridal Crown*. I saw Virginia Baker do it before I came to school, and have since considered her Kirsti as the finest thing that I saw in The Dramatic Workshop. Tonight, instead of being overwhelmed I was analytical. Virginia's reading of the lines was technically perfect and her pauses and stresses were probably as well planned (I could feel the planning) as in the earlier production.

The *Bridal Crown* is the story of Kirsti, a peasant girl who loves a miller's son and in secret bears his child. The bridal crown that Kirsti aspires to wear on her wedding day is a symbol of virginity and so she kills her child. She is tormented by this, and the story of her final redemption seems to me to make this the most gentle, the most ethereal play I have ever seen. Yet tonight I was not carried away by its spirit. More than anything, the importance of lights is borne in upon me in such a reading, for the lighting had added an aura of mysticism to the play which, when uniformly lit, became too earthy.

**Tuesday, March 6, 1945**

In Directors' Council this morning, Mr. Piscator gave us one of his inimitable speeches on the theatre and acting. It started with a letter from Edna Edison, a student who opposed many school policies and wanted to discontinue classes. She complained of having to attend *The Imaginary Invalid* rehearsals and learn the role of Angelique, which she was not given the opportunity to play, and she did not think it was right to rehearse so long for nothing, and to come to rehearsals to wait for two hours until she had something to do. It was essentially the same complaint that Barbara Sisson made when she refused all production work, and wanted only to attend classes.

Mr. Piscator referred us to the example of the Russian theatre and of Stanislavsky's methods of rehearsing a play. Once, Stanislavsky rehearsed a play for four years before deciding against presenting it. Patient work was not in vain because of what was gained in rehearsals.

In the name of discipline it was decided to divide the school among the directing students, letting each take two to four acting students and become their delegate, commissar, or spokesman, and to serve as a clearing-house for their complaints, comments and conflicts. I am timid enough about my own progress without having to be responsible for others, but even as a newcomer I was assigned to Ethel Shephard and a brand new arrival, Anita Fortus. I shall do what I can, though the task seems beyond my capacity.

In the Theatre Research class, Mr. Piscator continued his discourse on acting. He described the high purpose of rehearsal because it is then that an actor finds the "creative moment." It is for this moment that an actor lives, for only in this moment is he an artist, a creator. Mr. Piscator cannot teach us to find this creative moment, but he can teach us to listen for it and to recognize it. We must "listen to hear the grass grow," as Piscator put it. It is difficult to be prepared to perceive such moments, and Stanislavsky cannot help us, for this is something which is deeper than even the penetrating Stanislavsky can reach. As young actors we must first find our means of expression, we must learn to breathe and move, and do many simply mechanical things. We cannot hope to be creative in a classical role while we are still concerned with language and meter.

When Piscator studied to be an actor he was first taught rhetoric. He told us how, when he was young, he wanted sheer classical beauty in all

things. Like my mother, he admired Alexander Moissi, the great German classicist with his gentle, sweet, perfect voice, who played Max Reinhardt's Everyman. I recall that when I was 10 years old and was certainly not a judge of acting, my mother played me a record of Moissi reading a fairy tale, *Die Prinzessin mit der Erbse* (*The Princess and the Pea*). His rendition made a vivid impression on me. I remember saying to my mother how strange it was that when he spoke of the little princess being out in the cold and the rain and said, "*und der Wind hat geblasen*" ("and the wind was blowing"), I really felt the wind blew in his voice, as though it really blew then and there.

Piscator told us how he aspired to speak like Moissi. After a performance, Piscator (the boy) went home and tried to do exactly the same thing. He, too, wanted the classicist's perfection of voice and gesture. After seeing Moissi's *Hamlet*, he spent hours trying to say (and here he demonstrated), "*Sein oder nicht Sein, daß ist hier die Frage.*" He spoke in the aspirated syllables and used the long vowel sounds that Mother used, which she also acquired from her idol Moissi, whom she never ceased emulating.

Piscator ceased emulating Moissi after the war. For in the war he was awakened to all the problems of humanity, and society became a factor in art and not a factor outside of art. He could no longer tolerate the beautiful escapism of the ivory tower theatre. He fought against the classics, against Reinhardt. He invented Epic Theatre with its sociological and political implications. This was one of many theatrical revolutions. He told us of Meyerhold's biomechanical revolution and the unemotional theatre. Naturally this was a failure, since it was based on a false premise.

He concluded with more words on acting, on the importance of technique, and of attacking a role from all angles. He drew a parallel between the actor and the painter. The painter decides on a subject or a certain composition and then before painting it, he sketches it, over and over, as in a rehearsal, before he is ready to call the painting finished. He cited Picasso's *Guernica*, for which Picasso did so many sketches. The detail of one of the horse's heads which, in the final painting, is an abstraction of suffering, was worked on in many different ways. I have seen these sketches and it is obvious that neither the realistic heads nor the indecipherable shorthand drafts were Picasso's goal. His craftsmanship in realistic drawings prepares him for the perfection of the abstract masterpieces.

We then read some of the class critiques of *The Imaginary Invalid*. I was not asked to read mine, which I had written only that morning. Virginia Baker played Toinette, the saucy, impertinent maid, with verve and energy. Eugene Van Grona as the invalid Argan blustered and shouted and moaned alternately, wailed sickly, and scampered gaily. I could no more think of the crazy old man on stage as the charming, graceful dancer of our classes, than I could imagine the bullying, loud Toinette as Faust's tragic Gretchen. Caroline Townley played the hypocritical wife with finish and style. Gerence was indeed the ingenue, with a sweetness to match the name of Angelique. Hal Tulchin had the Molière sense of *joie de vivre* with lots of clever dance movements. Gene Benton was all pomp, and Darren Dublin played in falsetto with terrific comical results. The acting was exaggerated and done almost with a snicker. Pupils from the Children's Workshop were used to excellent effect as a chorus of doctors. The settings – which the class disliked – were expressionistic, though the furniture was of the period. Make-up included putty noses of improbable shapes and sizes. I liked the concept of the production, although most of my opinions were contradicted either by other students or by Piscator. Fortunately, I was not required to express these unpopular sentiments.

Today The March of Drama consisted of readings from the Elizabethans: *Volpone*, it seems, is as vulgar as *Bartholomew Fair*, which in my critique last week, I characterized as a cheap vaudeville show. The "robust Elizabethans" do not appeal to me. Steffi Blank did a scene from Webster's *The Duchess of Malfi*. She read the Duchess in the gory murder scene. Eugene read the killer and I read an angel's voice, part of an attempt to frighten the Duchess. It went quite well. Gloria Cacarro then did a reading from Molière's *The Doctor in Spite of Himself*. She endowed the shrewish wife with all the quick-witted humor of the lines. Charles Zimmerman was a gentle wood-chopper. The immense difference between two farcical scenes, one by an Elizabethan, the other by a writer of the court of Louis XIV, makes one shudder at England's late acquisition of refinement. As we are now approaching Shakespeare, everyone will attempt to read a favorite passage from the Bard. Steffi and I are collaborating on *The Tempest*, she as Prospero, I as Ariel. Such a lovely part, if only I could give it that spritely quality. She has played Prospero in England and can direct me somewhat.

A Stage Design class, in which Mr. Kerz explained intensive and extensive drama and presentational and representational theatre. The representational drama (insofar as I understand it) attempts to convince

the audience of the reality of the play – though it is not necessarily realistic – whereas presentational drama admits that the play is a play and that the actor is an actor and not the character he is playing. A nightclub comedian or M.C. is the most common modern vestige of presentational acting, while most of the legitimate theatre is representational. Our theatre today is also intensive drama; that is, it shows one small segment, or slice of life, magnified and concentrated. It does not concern itself with the outside world or other aspects of the problem but only with this room, these people, and this immediate time. Extensive theatre concerns life itself. It takes a broader view of the world, and the plot is affected by it, as it affects the plot. It unifies the various aspects in order to show us the environs of the situation. The theatre today has reached a dead end in representational intensive drama. To go on with it after it has reached its peak is to stagnate or, worse, to be reactionary, therefore the theatre of the future must be new, must seek a change. It may be in some form of expressionistic theatre or Epic Theatre (the highest form of extensive drama) but a new theatre will come after this war and this new theatre is ours.

### Wednesday, March 7, 1945

A voice class. I dislike these foolish exercises. I shall not go into detail but rather go on to my dancing class. Our *barre* exercises become more exciting and harder, yet easier, each week. The fundamentals of choreography have always eluded me, but with concentration I can now master most steps. It takes several times the mental effort to control my body than to do any mental gymnastics. When I finally mastered a simple step it took so much effort that Madame Piscator remarked that “it is certainly not necessary for anyone who can write poetry to stand and move so.” I tried to get it right and only wish we had more dancing classes.

Then an acting class with Margrit Wyler. We read the scene from *Candida* between Lexy Mills and Miss Prossy. I was asked to read Miss Prossy. Miss Wyler said that I maintained my own identity and neglected Miss Prossy. Evelyn read Lexy Mills. Miss Wyler asked us to speak on an emotional subject. Evelyn retold – in the first person – the story of the birth scene in *A Tree Grows in Brooklyn*. Then I told (with modifications) the story of Françoise La Soeur and Valeska Gert. The ardor with which I had asked the bondsman and the judge for help, only two weeks ago,

was gone completely, and only the righteous indignation of a meddler was left. Miss Wyler said that I showed the aroused emotion but not once my heart. Again, I broke up laughing and felt more miserable than ever about it. Miss Wyler asked me to imagine that the man in question was my husband, and although it seemed absurd to think of myself as La Soeur’s wife, *there is no facet of human nature alien to myself*. I explained my problem to Miss Wyler, who says that if I concentrate, I could not possibly be distracted enough to laugh. I’m afraid she is wrong. I wish there was someone who could help me.

A Styles Through the Ages class on German art of the 15th to 16th Century. Dr. Zucker disputes the name “German Renaissance.” German art in 1500 was still artistically in the middle ages. From Gothic architecture and other medieval forms, it leapt into the baroque in the late 17th century, never really developing the style of the Renaissance. Yet Dürer and Holbein were of that time, and theirs are among the most masterly works of art.

In the slides we saw a medieval statue of Eve by Riemenschneider, her face very young, very gentle and very German. Then some Cranachs – an Adam and Eve, a Martin Luther, and a Holy Family against a fairy tale background. Cranach’s *Adam and Eve* was described by Dr. Zucker as being “just one big embarrassment” contrasted with Dürer’s copper engraving of Adam and Eve, decorative, sedate, and intelligent. In another Flemish Adam and Eve, life and movement overflowed. The *Isenheimer Altar of Grünewald*, with its many details, was truly astonishing. A self-portrait of Dürer done at the age of 12 was a miracle of craftsmanship with no trace of immaturity. In his mature portraits – we saw images of his mother and of an old man – Dürer’s brutal frankness spared no one. Another painting, *The Young Jesus*, caricatured the elders of the Temple. Dr. Zucker ended the class with some of Holbein’s royal paintings, the lovely *Prince of Wales* and the austere *Jane Seymour*. The sumptuous painting of Henry himself, with its disproportionate shoulders, reveals the boorish, voluptuous fool that he was, over-adorned and disgusting.

### Thursday, March 8, 1945

My voice class today proved too much for me and my resentment has reached an uncontrollable point. I realize that Gloria Montemuro has

helped me as far as voice production goes, but that does not make up for the self-consciousness I feel during class. I spoke to her afterwards. I told her quite frankly that I was unhappy in her classes. I explained my speech background. She tried to be sympathetic but did not really understand. We came to no conclusion, but at least she knows my attitude and my reasons. I cannot judge the effect until my next speech class.

My History and Sociology class, now that we are done with the history part of it, has become even more interesting. For now we are dealing with the psychological aspect of the theatre, and more particularly, with the audience's psychology. In asking for a definition of psychology, we arrived at the subject of definitions in general, and reached a conclusion about what a good definition is. We defined psychology as the science dealing with the faculty of perception and of the human mind's reaction to this perception, as well as with the processes of the emotions, the intellect, physical motion and willpower. Dr. Zucker then divided the five, or rather six senses into those affecting the theatre (sight, hearing, and touch – as in costumes), and those not of the theatre (smell and taste). The "sixth sense" – definitely part of the theatre – Dr. Zucker defined as the "indefinable factor" of personality or personal magnetism, call it what you will. It is completely apart from beauty and intellect. Some may call it charm, yet it is not always a positive quality, for it encompasses Hitler as well as Sinatra, Roosevelt and Rudolf Valentino. But the sixth sense is not in our own control, whereas we can work with the other faculties.

The senses of sight and hearing should concern us most. The majority of audiences are visual, not auditory in orientation. We proved this in class by taking an ordinary word and letting someone say the first thing that came to their mind. With words like a parade where association of sight or sound is possible, the answers given were more often of a visual than an auditory nature. Dr. Zucker then told us of a theatrical law which holds good for no other art and in no other case: the importance of an active or an auditory ending. In other words, the curtain should fall on a piece of business, or a sound, like bells or an explosion – anything but dialogue. For the intellectual content must be sealed by a physical effect. As examples, he mentioned the weather vane in *St. Joan* and the sunlight in the windows in *Ghosts*. The climactic bell chimes in *A Bell for Adano* are a contemporary example. Achieving this is as often the director's job as the writer's. I think that almost all the plays I have seen end with action rather than dialogue, even if it is the lovers' final embrace. Dr. Zucker explained

the slowness of audience reactions, and that the audience must be forewarned of everything that comes later. A clue to every action must precede that action.

The audience frequently takes a few moments to laugh at a comic line. The actor must wait for the laugh. If he goes on talking, he will lose the comic effect of the laugh line and the sense of the one following it. Or he can freeze, but the wisest thing he can do is to fill in with a piece of inconspicuous business or a gesture. The other actor on the stage has a greater problem. When he hears the humorous line to which he is supposed to react, he has two possibilities. He can either aid the audience in speeding up the laugh by laughing himself immediately, in which case his laughter is in danger of distracting the audience from the original line. But if he does not laugh, there is the danger of a silence and an empty pause. For an actor cannot move between the lines and the laugh. It is clear now why Piscator requires students to study psychology in their second year.

Next, a class in costume design, with a lecture on Roman costume. Rules and regulations concerning clothing were strict and complex. Social position was indicated by clothing, as is true less and less today. Prisoners wore trousers like "the trousered barbarians" of other nations, which, to the Romans, was a sign of subjugation. The toga was worn only a short time and then only by the patricians to distinguish them from the plebeians. Among varieties of togas, there were differences showing rank. The shape of the toga is disputed, but the way it was worn is known.

Mr. Kerz gave us complete directions for putting on a toga. Whether diamond shaped or semicircular, the cloth is known to be 18 inches wide. One end of its length was thrown over the left shoulder to the floor. The rest, taken across the front under the right arm, is wrapped girdle-wise across the belly, then wrapped across the back and tied to the wrist. Pulling the toga out bag-wise in front forms a receptacle called an "asinus." Back drapery was sometimes used as a hood for rain or as a sign of mourning.

The tunic, as in Greece, was worn underneath the toga. Eventually, the plebeians wore togas of grey or brown cotton, but never, as the patricians later did, of silk from the Orient. Black togas were for mourning. Caesar and conquering generals wore purple togas. Priests, boys under 14 years of age, and magistrates wore the toga pretext, which was white with a purple border, as a sign of purity and character. Knights wore alternating wide and narrow stripes of purple.

About 200 B.C.E., elaborately embroidered tunics replaced togas. Plebeians wore the palladium (named for Pallas Athena) from Greece. Women wore a form of the Ionic tunic. Headdresses and coiffures were even more foolish than ours.

### Friday, March 9, 1945

Unhappy at missing acting classes, I was assigned to "tour" with the Molière. The tour took us all the way to Brooklyn, to P.S. 221, and any classes that I missed were well-sacrificed, for I learned a great deal. We overcame such practical difficulties as a girls' dressing room with one mirror, one light and no tables. My job became more one of wardrobe mistress than costume supervisor, and my odd jobs were innumerable. The script, having been adapted for children, turned Beline into a witch, and put Toinette into direct contact with the children. Toinette incorporated the speeches of the absent Beralde and Cléante. I cued Virginia as she put her greasepaint on, and found that she knew hardly any of the lines, but had complete self-confidence in her inventiveness and faith in her ability to improvise.

Standing backstage, I viewed an amazing spectacle. Told that the audience would consist of children, we expected a group about 12 years old. Instead, there appeared little wobbling ones of eight to ten, at most. Well, no sooner had the *Imaginary Invalid*, Argan, begun to speak, than the children started to think of other things. But our actors really went overboard. Virginia beat Eugene and threw him down. Eugene screamed himself hoarse and chased Caroline Townley (Beline) around the auditorium. And in the general bedlam, Darren Dublin, as Thomas Diaforus, broke up the actors – in every cast, there is a practical joker to take advantage of the bedlam. The fact that the play was presented at all, and that it was able to gain the children's attention, is more than could have been expected, although the presentation would have made Molière revolve in his grave at an amazing speed.

The second performance was given to a slightly older and less noisy audience, who at least followed the play. In the earlier show, when Darren spoke his long speeches, the meaning was so obviously lost that he turned to Eugene and said quite loudly, "It stinks." Even this went unnoticed by the audience. And yet this second audience followed most of what was

going on and enjoyed it. Afterwards, the cast had a taste of fame when hundreds of children besieged them for autographs. We struck the set and rode home. I felt that this was a tremendous lesson in feeling free and uninhibited on the stage. Even the slightest fear makes it more difficult to improvise in chaotic situations.

Today The March of Drama dealt with the later Elizabethans. Mr. Gassner spoke of Webster, Jonson, Dekker, Ford, and the subject of the night's demonstration, Phillip Massinger. They "embraced culture in a kind of bear hug." They loved humanity and caricatured it bitterly. The demonstration was from Massinger's *A New Way to Pay Old Debts*. Eleanor Epstein was a gentle Margret, Gene Benton was a rather good Overreach, but Louis Guss, as Greedy, outdid himself. In the end, when the food-loving Greedy is told that he may not eat, his expression changes slowly with the realization, and the disappointment is made visual by a klieg light which changes from red to orange to yellow to a deep green.

### Sunday, March 11, 1945

A Sunday evening program in the Urban Auditorium at school in memory of Romain Rolland. I was able to attend as an usherette. Piscator, who admires Rolland especially for his book *The People's Theatre* assembled a wonderful group of speakers. Barrett H. Clark, who has translated much of Rolland, spoke of Rolland as his teacher in Paris. Of all the descriptions of Rolland during the evening, his portrait of the gentle teacher, with his love of music and his unworldliness, touched me most, perhaps because I saw Jean-Christophe in him. Fredrika Zweig read an excerpt from her husband Stefan Zweig's biography of Rolland, a stereotyped description of a small, quiet man with flashing eyes. Henri Torres, a French newspaper editor, then spoke in French, and from what I understood he reminded everyone that fascists are not good and that we all hate them and that Rolland hated them. But he said it so beautifully, the rhythm of his speech, the effective pauses, the tonality, and even the gestures were so charming, that the audience was spellbound. André Spire, a French poet with white hair and a little white beard, read a letter from Rolland in an admirable manner. Fritz von Unruh, the poet, spoke in English. I don't know his poetry, nor his expression in his own language, but his speech was terrifically bad. "Romain Rolland," he said too loudly, "we have to look to

you, Romain Rolland! You are our inspiration!" etc. Then, as a personal tribute, Bronislav Huberman and Bruno Walter played Beethoven's *Kreutzer Sonata* splendidly. I sat next to Eugene Van Grona ("Music I heard with you was more than music"). Stella Adler, fine voiced and stately, read a passage from *The People's Theatre* in which Rolland says that there cannot be an "art" theatre as distinguished from a people's theatre, and that the people's theatre must be of, as well as for, the people. Jean-Benoît Lévy's French was beyond me, and Jules Romain, whose writing I respect, did not impress me. A scene from Rolland's play *The Wolves* was read by the magnificent Mr. Berghof, the less magnificent Philip Houston, and the boys of the Workshop. The writing was on an intellectual plane, a wonderful lecture, but poor theatre.

### Monday, March 12, 1945

A dance class with Eugene Van Grona. After some exercises, he went on to the principles of walking, walking in the dance. He showed us how to motivate our walking from a particular place. The upper chest in a line from under the shoulders, but above the breast, can direct our forward line, as well as show the mood of that movement. If we let this spot pull us forward as by a magnet, remembering to leave our shoulders down, we assume an authoritative walk, clean and fresh. This is a spirited and vital way of walking. If, on the other hand, we react and contract the chest, our whole body seems sunken and humble and negative.

We tried two exercises. First, we walked across the room haughtily, aggressively, and even tyrannically. In doing this, I thought of O'Neill's *Lazarus Laughed* and the line, "Hail, Caligula, Emperor of Rome" as I walked. Next we were to walk humbly, and here I made a connection in my mind with a picture that Dr. Zucker had shown us of Mary as a child going to receive the High Priest's blessing. We made further experiments: a dry, business-like gait, dull and unsensual. I tried this for the class, and though I could not find out where my characterization lay, those who watched felt that it was in my shoulders. To gain this feeling, we tried the opposite, the poetic, and then the sensual figure. The sensual figure, especially the woman, walks mostly from the hips, moving from the waist down, her body following. After this, we tried the dry character with tight hips, moving with shoulders forward and leading with his upper body,

and there we had the character perfectly. We ended this class with some fencing movement which, although I fear I failed at it, was dazzlingly done by the teacher.

Make-up class. Continuing from last week's attempt at early middle age, we went ahead to later middle age. Where last week's make-up had made me look like a very ill old prostitute, this week the class asked who had disinterred me. It seems hard for a teacher to realize that in a face as narrow and sallow as mine, the faintest shadow will stand out as a big indentation. The heavy line, therefore, takes my whole face in with it until there is nothing left but a hollow mask. Nevertheless, I am learning the rudiments of make-up.

In Current Plays, the class discussed *Jacobowsky and the Colonel*, which I thought was the best comedy I have seen on Broadway, although the class as a whole did not like it. Perhaps the European, Semitic flavor was closer to me.

In directing class, we discussed offstage emphasis, which puzzled some of the students, though Mr. Piscator made it quite plain. He got on to the stage and spoke to someone, then called to another person below, "Hello, Oscar, come on. You coming?" The manner in which he did it was so funny that the class dissolved in hilarity for the entire session and no concentration was achieved. Even Chouteau Dyer was uncontrollable and left in order that Piscator could continue the lesson. This, at any rate, made the idea of offstage emphasis clear. We then worked on building an entrance.

Last Friday's March of Drama reading was then discussed. Hal Tulchin had directed it and Gene Benton told us how Hal struggled to help the cast with some of the more obscure passages. The lines from *A New Way to Pay Old Debts* that caused the trouble were those in which Overreach praises his daughter's appearance and says that her feet, too, must be well-dressed, for they draw as much attention as the face. We spent the rest of the hour paraphrasing these words.

### Tuesday, March 13, 1945

In Directors' Council, we again discussed discipline: if a student is unwilling to do technical work, they may not participate in the acting work at school. All of which may be very important, but Mr. Piscator has so much

ring. I hope someday to be able to play the role of Viola. As the Duke, Gene was splendid, except that Mr. Piscator criticized his seated position as "unroyal" and pointed out the quality of grandeur that can be achieved by a more stately posture, and remarked, "It's interesting that he's a dancer." Last week, Gene told me that when he first started acting, he was so "movement conscious" that he had to work hard at forgetting movement. I might remember this in learning to speak less poetically. Priscilla Draghi played the bedroom scene with him and was very charming, though Mr. Piscator wanted her to show more love toward him when he did not notice it. Such as when taking off his boots, "Approach it as 'his foot'." I am so sure I could do that role. As Gene said, "I shall study it in advance," and try for it next year. That gives me a whole year.

### Tuesday, April 3, 1945

In Theatre Research, Mr. Piscator spent the two hours talking about his "political theatre." It was one of the most inspiring lectures. I tried to write down the essence of what Mr. Piscator said:

Art in itself seems a beautiful accomplishment of life, even when it does not criticize life. We begin with the question of how art should be used, and from this follows the question, "How should life be used?" Can we make progress in life or only in certain scientific discoveries? Is man little or is he big? For what purpose has he created something greater than himself, for some X, for some God? We die children of 70 years. We conquer nothing. Art is conquered out of the universe, out of that in man which is greater than himself. Art goes beyond the walls, where even our brains cannot go. Genius – is it a sickness, a deformation of the individual? Genius and insanity are balanced on a knife blade.

Lenin called the idea of God into question. We have turned back to what we see. We know that other things exist, but what we see is organizable: society, justice, an end to wars. Shall we reach, as men, what we have thought as men since the beginning, since Plato and Christ? But the doubters say, "Who gives me the next piece of butter?" The victors are the powerful who make wars, and the others are "the masses." Thus both art for art's sake and art with an aim start from

the question, "Can we progress or shall we be driven by unknown forces, by Christ's fantastic teachings, by God, by that revolutionary book, the Bible? There is betrayal everywhere, from the drugstore to The New School: the Pope in the fantastic Vatican wears good clothes. Christ is a bestseller who asks for eternal peace. We kill 1000 with one shot.

The realists say at least we are on the right side. One knew about Iowa, but not Iwo Jima. Four thousand men died and now we know about Iwo Jima. This is progress. The crosses in Strasbourg are progress. 13 million died in the last war, perhaps 30 million in this one! Progress? Behind all this, the XYZ power, God. The *Venus de Milo*, and *Parsifal*, below us in the dirt, unlooked at. Such progress! The realists hold that art is above life. Let the people come out of their darkness to see beauty and art in theatres and museums. Then let them return to their dirt. The dirt is unchangeable. Thus speak the realists.

But there are those who say we need not separate art and life. Life in itself is art. Let us build life in an artful way till we need no art. Art may be seen as an excuse for our imperfections. The human spirit can build, at its highest points, manifestations of the spirit – cathedrals, the Acropolis. We cannot build the pillars of the Acropolis today. Although the Bank of Athens is built to the same measurements as the Acropolis, the spirit is lacking, the harmony of spirit and technique. We made of art a special thing, as we did of religion. Religion became an institution and the spirit flew out. The spirit flew out when we divided art and society.

Can we build society like an eight-cylinder car, by understanding its elements? Can we do this without considering spiritual form, which governs human happiness? Spiritual meaning, growth and intelligence. We need art to complete the incompleteness of life. But first, we need society and security in society. We perfect the world through the nation and through the self, and we must take a step toward this in our theatre. Political theatre is art theatre.

There are those who say that theatre is not art because it is a programmatic form. In music and painting, you can be abstract or sheerly beautiful. But the theatre is thoughtful, every word opens a world of thought with an analysis of thought. The art theatre was always bound to thinking, and always seeking for truth. Thus the art theatre was always a political theatre. The theatre turns, even unconsciously,

to politics. Recently in Russia, the Communists started to use theatre consciously again, to show two sides, good and bad, presenting problems and suggesting solutions. To avoid the negative is not to build the positive. How do we build the positive? After the disastrous war from 1914 to 1918, the struggle for clarity began and our political theatre began. Reinhardt continued the beautiful theatre, but we returned to the theatre to fight.

Theatre, too, is like an opium for the people, musicals, even the classics, like the church which kept the real religion hidden in ceremony. The church, the inn and the theatre are three vital buildings in any city. We must make art that is conscious. Clarify, like Lear in the storm, his revolutionary cries unheeded.

Only once in Brussels, a revolution started in a theatre. When *La Muette de Portici* was given at the Theatre de la Monnaie, and the audience stormed out of the theatre and started the revolution that liberated Belgium from the Dutch.

But today, not only the high admission prices, but also the absence of spirit prevents us from realizing a people's theatre. The money, the ideology and the spirit are in the hands of another class, and in the midst of this stupidity, we have war. Art, conscious art, political art needs the necessity and the desire for change. One side here fights for social change, the other does not need it.

Art is not made consciously to point out the moral necessity of what an artwork must be. In this way, the propaganda picture emotionally kills the intellect. To understand, we must remain objective. If we are drawn in, we no longer think. The war movies merely upset us with how many dead people lie all around, and still the hero gets the girl. The real causes of war must be made clear to move an audience to action.

Romain Rolland said, "Action springs from the spectacle of action." The political theatre exists to take the theatre out of political *argument* and into political *action*. But we do not arise, we do not move. All the action of the world is in this room. We must face up to this fact. Then art conquers art, for our art is in our life and is no longer an outside thing. Then we can conquer by wisdom and bring art back to beauty.

This is the point: Political theatre is for me the only art theatre. There are some who would demean the art theatre. Why build a love

story and then construct a social implication around it? No, we must build a case, clarify it, build around it.

Epic Theatre has no enclosure, it is complete. The word "politics" comes from the Greek "polis," meaning "the whole city," all the surroundings. Every event has a relation to the case. It means more than one plot. I used all I had. I said that the actor must demonstrate, use film, design, use the audience to describe the impact of the story. Emotion by thought, as in *Nathan the Wise*. We have not reached the beginning of that theatre. 1890: The Volksbühne, *The Weavers*. 1890: naturalism, Zola, Antoine. In Russia: Tolstoy, teaching through his plays, *The Fruits of the Enlightenment*, Schiller.

In the French Revolution, the theatre failed its mission. These are the ancestors of our political theatre. We should study the theatre in two ways – technically, and to give content to it. Study in our age and time should lead us to the problem of content so that these problems might lead us to greatness. He who wants nothing is nothing. We are as great as our cause. Art grows only under the sun of idealism. The ancient Greeks called it "the perfection." If you are not married to your art, your art is dead. Stay with art like a priest.

What must we do to deserve such a teacher?

### Wednesday, April 4 and Thursday, April 5, 1945

Absent two days for Passover and to digest that lecture.

### Friday, April 6, 1945

Our first full dress rehearsal of *The Sheepwell*. My absence has not been too much of a problem, for it seems (one fears to say it, according to the old actors' superstition) to be going well. Mr. Piscator is, of course, not satisfied, but considers it adequate. This run-through lasted from ten in the morning until the March of Drama lecture at eight. It seems like an endless play. Not Gassner, but Paolo Milano spoke of the Spanish theatre. Most of his speech was given over to the life of Lope de Vega. This man, perhaps a genius, was not only a prolific writer but a prolific liver, lover

and father. His plays number circa 2800 and his *amours* are scarcely dwarfed by such a number. Yet he became a priest and died, as Dr. Milano puts it, "in the arms of the Holy Roman Catholic Church." I could not stay till the end of the lecture, as I had to return to rehearsal, which lasted until three in the morning. My voice is ruined with screaming "*Fuente Ovejuna*" and the tiredness of hard work.

But Mr. Piscator, like the miracle of energy that he is, still directed with a vigor that none of his 20-year-old students could equal.

### Saturday, April 7, 1945

Before the performance, a rehearsal in dress but not make-up. The play is still loose and needs more work, but this is not possible. When we were photographed, I felt very professional for some foolish reason. Only a half hour between rehearsal and performance call. Mother called for me and I ate, very excitedly, some macaroni at the Waldorf Cafeteria, with my costume under my coat and strange white cotton stockings and *hurachas*. Then, to the theatre, where we are told our make-up is too light. We all set about mixing Max Factor 8 and 7, and I found a ruddy, very dark tone, almost too Spanish. Vicki Paul, the lead, was not half so nervous as I, while Harriet Charney, the second lead, was sick, as was half the cast. After the play started, with the audience not too responsive, I awaited the crowd scenes as though they were my solos. Finally, the welcoming scene at the entrance. I was so excited that the shouting came easily, but the letdown came when I had to remain quiet as the action proceeded. This was the only point during which my bogey-man, the nervous laugh, tried to intrude – but I drowned him immediately. All went well in the wedding scene and I successfully delivered my single line, "Pedrito!" in the torture scene. To my future success I say, "Katherine Cornell, I started as an off-stage groan."

### Sunday, April 8, 1945

Run-through and performance. Until tonight I wasn't aware that the second night is always the worst performance because of the so-called letdown. This performance seemed to me to be a 100 percent better, and

the difference lay mainly with the audience. Last night the audience found the play inappropriately amusing and laughed, even during such tragic scenes as the rape and death of Jacinta, and at the torture scenes. But tonight, the audience liked the play and even hissed Harold Dyrenforth on his curtain call, in real blood-and-thunder melodramatic style.

It brought to mind the U.S.O. in Hempstead and Carl and Don Del Rio, whom the soldiers hissed when we meagerly attempted to present *He Ain't Done Right by Nell*. If I directed that same play now, applying the knowledge that I have gained in this short time, how much more unified, comical and professional it would appear. How much better my approach will be in two years. *Sheepwell* was an invaluable experience and I am sorry it is over. For me, the letdown comes now. And the sore throat, for in my enthusiasm for the *Commendador* and for my role, forgetting Miss Montemuro's warnings, I screamed myself hoarse and can hardly speak.

Dance class. Terms like *rond de jambe*, *attitude* and *plié* become part of my vocabulary. But the correct execution is not yet achieved. If I had even a short class daily it would be helpful or if I could practice at home, but time presses terribly and the summer comes.

Make-up brought about a general strike. Most of my classmates complained that they had hurt their skins with the *Sheepwell* make-up and did not wish to irritate them further. Of course, this is a rather feeble alibi for laziness, since our fondest ambition is to do one or two shows a day. Esther made up Helen Braille, from early middle age to old age. I am tired of middle-aged make-up, for once achieved, it is always within my grasp.

Current Plays shows Mr. Ince in the role in which my first impression had visualized him. He is producing *Margret* and discusses his problems of casting and financing with us. This simple two-set, ten-character play will cost a minimum of \$50,000 to produce. The other side of the man-you-want-an-appointment-with became humanized, as do his problems in casting. He lamented the difficulty of being gentle with the hundreds of actors that want a reading. Still, Mr. Ince says he wants a "new" actress for Penelope in order to give a young actress a chance. But theatre as a business still brings a bad taste to my mouth, left there by Genius Inc. and the St. James Hotel, where I hung out for years of making the rounds, surrounded by an odor vaguely like bad and watered gin.

From the prosaic to the divine, we come to directing class, where we worked on problems of background action. Eugene Van Grona staged a scene. Taking his idea from *Waterloo Bridge*, he made his main action

The aim of drama is to involve the audience in the action, and the history of theatre is simply the history of greater or lesser triumph in . . . audience participation.

In that same essay Walter Gropius, the architect who designed Piscator's never-built Total Theatre, wrote:

We intend, by these technical means (projections, scaffolds, movable structures, etc.) to force the audience into close contact with the scenic action, to make them participate in the playing, and not to allow them to hide behind curtains.

The use of the word "force" is significant.

Because when it came to "participation in the playing," Piscator felt the need for control, to protect the rehearsed work, rather than dealing with the chaos of the spectator's improvisation.

Piscator understood both the social necessity of escaping from the elitist architecture of the traditional theatre, and the revolutionary imperative of participation. He struggled all his life to find means, dramaturgical or technical, to fulfill this imperative, and invented the most extraordinary devices to bring it about. Only one thing – the most evident and available step – he did not and he could not take. It remained for his students, for his artistic progeny to bridge the gap between the audience and the performer.

### **Becoming a Director: A Confession**

I had enrolled in the Workshop as an acting student, since I had been brought up to be an actress. But after only a few days at the Workshop, and a few days of watching Piscator at work, I was certain that I needed to work in a broader field, with the wider scope of the director who absorbs the whole play, and can transmit its meanings to the actors and the audience. And who can, when necessary, reinterpret the playwright's meanings, search out the historical truth, and in the use of setting, lights and sound, relate the play's expression to the time and the environment in which it is performed. I wanted to be a director.

As briefly documented in my Notebook, with great trepidation I went to Piscator's office. Imperious, seated in front of his map of wartime Europe,

he heard my request with cold regard. "Women," he explained, with a certain impatience, "lack staying power in the theatre. They tend to get married and give up the work. So it is better you stick to acting." I was stricken. What could I say when my mother's example seemed to prove his contention, and how could I convince this misogynist of the sincerity of my intentions, and of the endurance of my dedication to the theatre?

Shamefacedly I admit now that I used an old tactic that women often stoop to, in order to gain consideration from the men who feel that they do not belong in certain exacting professions, which they believe to be exclusively man's domain. I cried. And I got permission to take Piscator's directing course.

### **The Inspiration of Joseph Urban's Architecture**

The New School for Social Research was designed by Joseph Urban in 1930, and is a thrilling example of the great vision of modern architecture during its pioneer stage. It was the first such facility developed exclusively for adult education, and is hailed as an outstanding example of the "International Style" of 20th century architecture. Its dramatic spaces are in themselves an inspiration to students, including its sunburst auditorium, where we performed our plays, its moving social murals by Orozco, and the splendid Benton Room with Thomas Hart Benton's marvelous panorama of American humanity. In later years, the Workshop was located in The President Theatre, a small midtown enclave of serious work in the midst of Broadway, and then in The Rooftop Theatre on the Lower East Side in an old Minsky vaudeville house, where Piscator thought to assemble again his long-hoped-for "proletarian audience."

When I attended my first classes in the Urban building, I found it a miraculous place, in which every space, and every wall was created to convey an aesthetic that was basic to the education we were receiving. A fit place to house Piscator's teaching.

### **Eleanor Fitzgerald**

Eleanor Fitzgerald, always called Fitzi, was one of the remarkable theatrical figures of the time. She'd had a long career at the Provincetown Playhouse

when Eugene O'Neill and Edna St. Vincent Millay were carrying the banner of art theatre during a dry time, and later wrote a book about the Playhouse. She was also the longtime lover of the anarchist Alexander Berkman.

She was one of those energies that attaches itself to certain men of genius, who she can then encourage and assist. According to Maria Piscator, e.e. cummings said of Fitz that "She was the incarnation of the mystery of individuality, of a nightly sorrowing and rejoicing, a prodigious, generous, fearlessly unique and passionate human being." Piscator sometimes made fun of her going out "for a liquid sandwich," but he valued her highly. I used to sit on a little shelf in the back of the box office and listen to her stories of life and love, and theatre.

For Piscator, she ran the box office and the subscriptions, organizing the audiences for the plays. She did this work because she adored Piscator, and it fulfilled her need to be near a man of greatness.

When Piscator and Albert Johnson agreed to create a theatre school, it was Fitz who said, "We must make a school that is a theatre, because Piscator must have a theatre to work in!" It was her insistence that finally established The Studio Theatre at the Workshop. After the fiscal failure of The Studio Theatre – and Piscator's work was constantly crushed by theatre economics – a more modest plan developed: The March of Drama.

## The Classes

### *The March of Drama*

Our classes began at ten in the morning, and the Workshop day ended at eleven in the evening, or after the performance on Fridays (see Figure 4 opposite).

It was The March of Drama that proved to be the seed of "the school that was a theatre." A linear and pedagogical idea, The March of Drama presented a panorama of the history of the theatre from Aeschylus to the present. Piscator's school could not present this as a history course without relating it specifically to modern times, through the eyes of Marx and Toynbee, through the lessons of fascism and socialism, through two world wars, and our hopes for the future. Recreated on pp. 130–31 are two pages of the school catalogue, showing the scope of this vast pageant.

	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY
10-11		Directors' Council B.R.	Voice C D.S.		Voice C D.S.
11-12		Theatre Research B.R.			Acting D
12-1		Theatre Research B.R.		Voice C D.S.	Acting D
1-2	DANCE		Dance	March of Drama	
2-3	Dance B D.S.	March of Drama D.S.	Dance B D.S.	March of Drama	Acting D
3-4	Make-up B	March of Drama D.S.		March of Drama	Acting D
4-5	Make-up B	March of Drama D.S.	Acting D	Hist & Sociology of the Theatre	
5-6	<u>Current Plays</u>		Acting D		
6-7		Stage Design		Costume design	
7-8		Stage Design		Costume design	
8.30-9	Direction D.S.	Styles thru Ages A			March of Drama
9-10.30	Direction D.S.	Styles thru Ages B			March of Drama

Figure 4 Judith's weekly schedule.

On Friday evenings, either John Gassner or Paolo Milano discussed a period, and outlined the historical perspectives. They analyzed the specific work to be shown as an example of the style and the politics of the time. Gassner and Milano, two of the day's leading figures in theatrical history and criticism, presented each period within its economic and cultural context. They showed us the Epic quality that positions drama in the changing stream of history, and how it deepens our understanding of the fabric of the time. After Milano or Gassner gave their talk, one of the directing students presented a reading of the designated play, performed by Workshop students.

## THE MARCH OF THE DRAMA

### A. GENERAL SURVEY. 2 hours.

John Gassner, Paolo Milano

Required for all students enrolled in one or more courses in the Dramatic Workshop who have not completed their first year. The fee to them is nominal.

Members of this class are considered not as students but as audience and participants in play readings and discussion of dramatic works of art which constitute a kind of living history of the theatre, stressing characteristic expression and style in the various stages of its development. The course may be thought of as the nerve center that unites all the separate branches of dramatic study in the drama itself.

**Masters of the Drama** by John Gassner is used as preparation and background for understanding the cultural and social forces to which the theatre has responded in various epochs. The course is supplemented by Dr. Zucker's course in styles through the masterpieces of the arts, and by the course in dance styles of Maria Ley and Vincenzo Celli.

#### FALL TERM

##### Lectures

##### Readings

I Primitive rites and passion plays: functions of drama	
II Aeschylus and the beginning of tragedy: the dramatist as thinker; drama and Epic Theatre	Agamemnon
III Sophocles and the development of dramatic technique	Antigone
IV Euripides and modern drama: the problem drama; the psychological drama	Trojan Women
V Aristophanes and Roman comedy: the functions of comedy	Lysistrata
VI Oriental drama, sensuousness, ethics and mysticism in the theatre	Shakuntala
VII The Medieval drama: communal theatre	Everyman and the Second Shepherd's Play
VIII Commedia dell'Arte and the Renaissance	
IX Lope de Vega and Calderon: the golden age of Spanish theatre	The Sheep-Well
X Marlowe and the rise of Elizabethan drama: the theatre of will and self-assertion	Dr. Faustus
XI Shakespeare: the drama of individualism; the art of characterization	Richard II
XII Shakespeare and the modern world. Ben Jonson and the last of the Elizabethans	King Lear
XIII The classical French drama – Racine, Corneille, individualism and order	Phaedra

XIV Molière and the comedy of society	Misanthrope
XV Congreve and Restoration comedy, Lessing and the Enlightenment; rationalism and the drama	The Way of the World, Nathan the Wise
XVI Goethe and romanticism: the drama of aspiration	Faust
XVII Victor Hugo and the decline of romanticism: Scribe and the rise of the "well-made" play	Hernani

#### SPRING TERM

I Ibsen: the rise of realism in modern society	Peer Gynt
II Ibsen: the development of realism, character and society in the realistic theatre	Hedda Gabler
III Strindberg and the naturalistic theatre – Zola, Antoine, etc. The rise of naturalism	The Father
IV Hauptmann: the meaning and modification of naturalism	The Weavers
V Neo-romanticism: Maeterlinck and Rostand	
VI Pirandello and Benavente: cerebral drama	Six Characters in Search of an Author
VII Russian realism from Gogol to Tolstoy	The Inspector-General
VIII Anton Chekhov: the drama of attrition	The Cherry Orchard
IX Maxim Gorky and the Soviet drama: new aspects of realism and communal theatre	The Lower Depths
X Expressionism: Wedekind, Kaiser, Toller, Copek, etc. The interior drama; dramatic distortion and emphasis	From Morn to Midnight
XI The rise of Epic Theatre: Brecht and Piscator; epic concepts of the drama	An American Tragedy
XII Giraudoux, Bourdet, etc.: French drama in the twentieth century, drama and entertainment	Amphitryon 38
XIII The awakening of the English theatre: Shaw and his precursors	Pygmalion
XIV Bernard Shaw and the comedy of social criticism	Saint Joan
XV Twentieth century English theatre: Galsworthy, Barker, Barrie, Masfield, etc.	Strife
XVI Eugene O'Neill and the awakening of the American theatre	Desire Under the Elms
XVII American drama since 1918: Anderson, Howard, Rice, Paul Green, Behrman, Kaufman, Barry, etc.	Winterset
XVIII New forces in American drama: the social drama, the living newspapers, and Epic Theatre	Awake and Sing

Figure 5 Lecture Programme for The March of Drama, Fall term and Spring term, taught by John Gassner and Paolo Milano.

Each student director tried to use his or her hour on the stage to get beyond the semi-circle of chairs and the actors reading, script in hand. There was no budget for these March of Drama readings, but the director could add a shawl, a crown or a special chair brought from home, or add a bit of music on a flute or a record. And the director could cast students who agreed to learn the lines and get off book, and then what was to stop them from moving around? And soon, adding a few lights, the readings illustrating the March of Drama lectures became full weekly productions.

The trend was unstoppable. The best of these productions became The March of Drama Repertory, and there it was – the school that was a theatre.

### *Theatre Research*

The Theatre Research class was Piscator's seminar. It was the platform from which Piscator communicated his ideas to us, and taught us to clarify and express our own ideas. "The purpose of Theatre Research is to establish a philosophy of the theatre," he said.

I quote from the school brochure: "Theatre Research: Mr. Piscator's lecture and discussion period serves continuously to coordinate all the studies and activities of The Dramatic Workshop and to relate them to a coherent philosophy of the theatre. Based on criticism of the production program, it investigates and interprets every aspect of the theatre as a classic heritage, a contemporary art and a social and moral institution." It was the one class that the whole school was expected to attend.

On the day after Franklin Roosevelt's death, Piscator used the Theatre Research class to speak to us of the life of the deceased president to attune us to the historical dimension; that is, to a sense of being inside the historical process. We all live in history, but we can do so fully aware of the process of which we are a part, or we can live the unconsidered life, and feel neither our participation, nor our responsibility.

### *Theatre Research Critique*

The Theatre Research assignments were very specific: we had to present a written critique of The March of Drama performance of the preceding Friday evening. Piscator said:

Criticism is not the ignoble thing we read today in the newspaper, it is a noble mission to the theatre. There have been great critics like Aristotle and Lessing. Without Lessing there could not have been Goethe or Schiller. We criticize with prejudice – taste is prejudice. But we must think dialectically (Hegelian) – that is, we must think from more than one point of view.

If we found these ideas difficult, and we did, we were given the following outline to apply to our critique of the plays:

- I. The Play's Necessity
  - A. The playwright's original purpose
  - B. The play's message in terms of today
- II. The Playwright – his world, his point of view
- III. The Play
  - A. Plot: story of the play in one paragraph, stating situation, conflict and outcome
  - B. Action: how the plot is developed, detailed description of the story
  - C. Style: several characteristics, specific exceptions
- IV. The Performance
  - A. Direction
    - a. Dramaturgy – adaptation, cutting
    - b. Style – does performance achieve the prescribed mood and message?
    - c. Of actors, casting, coaching
    - d. Staging – total concept
  - B. Acting – describe one actor in detail, all in general
  - C. Design – of setting, costumes, props
  - D. Lighting
  - E. Sound and Music
  - F. Technical execution
- V. The critic's personal opinion
  - A. Objective: does the play achieve its necessity?
  - B. Subjective: how would you have done it?

Figure 6 Piscator's suggested outline for Theatre Research Critique assignments.

I took this outline quite literally and it was a heavy task to cover all the points every week, along with our classwork and our rehearsals for the next March of Drama play. I did try to do all the research: the world and points of view of all the authors, from Sophocles to Goethe, from Marlowe to O'Casey – and tried with the help of Gassner and Milano to analyze each work. Piscator liked my essays and asked me each week to read them aloud to the class. But later on, for the very reason that I followed his outline so closely, he complained that I was “a typewriter director.”

Years later I learned that those youthful essays were placed in the Piscator archives at the Akademie der Künste in Berlin, where they are open to scholars and researchers. And some 60 years later I find that I still have in my possession eight of these Theatre Research papers: *Nathan the Wise*, *Faust*, Piscator's film, *The Revolt of the Fishermen*, *Mourning Becomes Electra*, *Claudia*, *Gaol Gate*, *Private Lives*, and *The Cause of It All*.

Several of my classmates presented excellent critiques, though they tended not to use the outline so methodically, and paid more heed to the performances. I tended to emphasize the literary, historical and dramaturgical material.

Following the readings of one or two papers came Piscator's discourse on the play in the light of history. With history as the background, the Epic play is a kind of panoramic tapestry against which the ideas in the foreground are enacted by performers who are aware of their context, and guided by the director who has made coherent the three elements of the Piscatorean performance:

1. The epic background
2. The immediacy of the performance
3. The usefulness of the performance to the spectator

Piscator's categories: The Past = History interpreted by:

1. the playwright
2. the director and set designer
3. the performers
4. the spectator-participant

The Present = The play in the theatre:

1. Total Theatre
2. Participation of the spectator
3. Political/Social interpretation

The Future = The political results of Total Theatre

## The Plays

### *The Sheepwell (Fuente Ovejuna)*

*Fuente Ovejuna*, *The Sheepwell*, by Lope de Vega, was the first full production in which I performed at The Dramatic Workshop in April, 1945. The play, which Lope de Vega drew from the history of Andalusia in the 15th century, is a romance about a tyrannical overlord, and the resistance that a town called *The Sheepwell* puts up when a young couple defy the overlord's seigniorial right to spend the wedding night with the bride. The tyrant is killed and the townspeople are tortured to reveal the name of the killer. They answer with one voice: “*Fuente Ovejuna*.”

In “The Proletarian Theatre: Its Fundamental Principle and Its Tasks,” published in 1920, Piscator wrote:

It will be possible to make every play into an instrument to strengthen the concept of mass struggle, to deepen revolutionary insight into historical necessities . . . In this way a large portion of world literature can be made to serve the cause of the revolutionary proletariat, just as the whole of world literature can be used for the political purpose of propagating the concept of class struggle.

In *The Sheepwell* the class struggle and the solidarity of resistance are basic to the plot, though as always Piscator made changes in the script.

I was given the role of a child, one of the people of the village of Fuente Ovejuna. In his first talk to us Piscator pointed out that “the people are the true protagonists” and that we who play the masses are playing the leading role. In my youthful exuberance I thereupon worked on my ensemble role as a full characterization, creating a name and a history for my character, and felt rewarded when I was given a single word to cry out, a line all my own, calling out my playmate's name, “Pedrito!” when it was his turn to be tortured.