

32
/THE RISE OF THE WOMAN DIRECTOR ON BROADWAY,
1920-1950/

by

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter

I. INTRODUCTION.....	1
Proposal.....	1
Existing Literature.....	3
Methodology.....	7
II. BACKGROUND HISTORY.....	15
History of the American Director.....	15
The Actress-Manager in America.....	20
Changes in Society's View of Women.....	25
III. WOMEN IN THEATRE, 1900-1950.....	33
IV. THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE WOMAN DIRECTOR.....	53
V. SELECTED WOMEN DIRECTORS.....	68
VI. CONCLUSION.....	102
APPENDIX.....	108
BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	128

CHAPTER I

Introduction

Proposal

Using the Burns Mantle Best Plays yearbook series, a statistical review of Broadway productions and directors reveals that in 1894, 3.23 percent of the plays were directed by a woman. In 1983 that figure was 2.38 percent. While these polar figures suggest that there has been little change in the last ninety years, there were important variations. Most significantly from 1920 to 1950 there was a rise in the percentage of women directors on Broadway from three percent in 1919 to thirteen percent in 1950. After 1950 the percentages declined and by 1955 the figure was zero.¹ The three decade period of 1920-1950 represents the peak period of success for the woman director on Broadway. This study will document statistically that rise, investigate the factors that hampered women and suggest forces that contributed to the emergence of the woman director, and survey the careers of the major female directors of the period 1920-1950.

Although the profession of stage directing arose as a specialty beginning about 1895, the emergence of the woman director was delayed due to three factors: 1) the role of the director as autocrat and technical expert, 2) entrance to the

profession through the male-dominated profession of stage manager, and 3) the predominance of male producers, as typified by the Syndicate, who hired few women directors.

By 1910 both as audience members and as performers, some women began to grow dissatisfied with the American drama as it was shaped and controlled by men. In order to promote quality drama, women needed to have greater control. To meet this need, women organized professional clubs and drama societies to provide networks and education for themselves. They helped organize little theatre groups in which they could gain experience as producers and directors. By 1920 these better-educated and more experienced women were able to find more employment as directors in commercial theatres.

The rise of the woman director after 1920 was aided by: 1) the change in the role of the director to one of interpretive artist and psychologist, 2) increased equality for women in general, 3) economic prosperity which allowed more productions and greater risk-taking in the choice of drama, and 4) the shift in production control to theatre companies (many of which had originated in the Little Theatre movement) and to such men as the Shuberts who regularly hired women directors. The rise of the woman director continued through the 1940s by which time women were able to enter the profession directly instead of going through the previously prescribed route of acting or playwriting.

After 1950 the percentage of women directors on Broadway

sharply declined due to 1) a general change in societal attitudes back to traditional values, and 2) increasing production costs which forced producers to make more conservative investment decisions. With the change in attitudes and types of drama produced, women directors, both voluntarily and involuntarily, left the Broadway stage.

Existing Literature

Existing scholarly literature in the field of women directors falls into two primary categories: the general history of directing and the history of women in theatre.

Most general studies on the history of directing in America are unpublished doctoral dissertations written in the 1950s and 1960s. "Rehearsal-Direction Practices and Actor-Director Relationships in the American Theatre from the Halleas to Actors' Equity" by David Schaal, 1956, covered the actor-manager through manager-director period, from Colonial America to 1919, with concentration on the rehearsal³ practices. Charlotte Cushman, Anna Cora Mowatt, and Laura Keene were included as actress-managers.

The next study, in 1957, was Charles Cox's "The Evolution of the Stage Director in America" which evaluated the changing role of the director from the nineteenth century stage manager to the modern director of the mid-twentieth century.⁴ His study included discussions of Laura Keene and Margaret Webster with additional brief comments on Margaret

Anglin, Eva LeGallienne and Lillian Hellman. The appendix to Cox's study, based on the Burns Mantle series of Best Plays, listed the New York productions by director's name from 1894-1950. This appendix was important as a starting point for the present study.

Covering the same general trends as Cox, but narrowing the scope, James Cochran wrote "The Development of the Professional Stage Director: a Critical-Historical Explanation of Representative Professional Directors on the New York Stage, 1896-1916" in 1958.⁵ The basis of his study centered on the theories and practices of ten major directors of that period: Ben Teal, Joseph Humphries, Clyde Fitch, Eugene Preabrey, George Marion, Hugh Ford, George Platt, John Emerson, and Minnie Maddern Fiske.

Charles Metten shifted the emphasis from practices to writings in his 1960 study "The Development in America of Theories of Directing as Found in American Writings, 1914-1930."⁶ As in the Cochran study, Fiske was the only major woman director included.

Robert Hazzard returned to looking at specific directors in "The Development of Selected American Stage Directors from 1926 to 1960," completed in 1962.⁷ Although he evaluated the theories and practices of directors during the peak period of activity by women directors in New York, his study included no women, only twelve men. He explained that he limited his work to Americans who had directed a minimal number of plays

on Broadway and who were not significantly active in any other field, such as acting and playwriting, and yet he included Elmer Rice. He noted that he had eliminated Eva LeGallienne because of a lack of information on her directing techniques. Why he eliminated other such women as Agnes Morgan, Antoinette Perry, or Margaret Webster was not specified.

In 1963 the first general study of the history of directing to be done by a woman was completed: Helen Krich Chinoy's "The Impact of the Stage Director on American Plays, Playwrights and Theatres, 1860-1930."⁸ Her study did include women but the concentration was on their participation in the little theatres, rather than on Broadway, and does not go beyond 1930.

After the 1960s, research shifted towards studies of individual directors rather than historical overviews. Fiske, LeGallienne, Webster and Margo Jones were the most recognized and studied women directors of the twentieth century.

A summation of the findings of the Schaal, Cox, Cochran, Metten, Hazzard, and Chinoy studies will be found in Chapter II, Section A, of this work.

Research on women in theatre as a separate phenomenon is a rather recent field. One of the earliest works, Ruth Manser's "The Influence of the American Actress on the Development of the American Theatre, 1835-1935" (1938), was

indicative of the equation of women and the acting profession and was completed before the rise of the woman⁹ director would have been documented. Her study covered the history of the actress-manager in America from Charlotte Cushman to Eva LeGallienne, and included Mrs. John Drew, Julia Marlowe, Mrs. Fiske, Margaret Anglin, Ethel Barrymore, and Alla Nazimova.

Until the mid-1970s other scholarly studies on women in theatre centered on individuals. Speech Communication and Theatre Arts: a Classified Bibliography of Theses and Dissertations, 1973-1978, listed a 1974 thesis, "The Role of American Women in American Theatre, 1940-1970" by Nancy¹⁰ Kolhoff. Since this work was unobtainable at the time of this study, specifics of its coverage are not known; however, the study covered only the period after 1940. The only other notation of a scholarly work on the general history of women directors was found in the appendix listing of studies in Women in American Theatre--"The Contributions of Selected Women Directors in Twentieth Century American Theatre" by¹¹ Mary Newell, Wayne State University, (1975). No trace of this study, however, was found in the Comprehensive Dissertation¹² Index or by the Wayne State University Library.

The two major published works in the field of women in theatre are Women in American Theatre (1981), by Helen Krich Chinoy and Linda Walsh Jenkins, and Women in Theatre: Compassion and Hope (1983), edited by Karen Malpede. Both¹³

books include writings by and about selected women in a variety of theatrical professions. Chinoy and Jenkins included directors Mary Shaw, Rachel Crothers and Anne Nichols. Malpede's book included only Eva LeGallienne as a director from the 1900-1950 period.

As interest in the field of women in theatre grows, additional publications are emerging such as Albert Auster's Actresses and Suffragists: Women in the American Theater, 1890-1920 (1984), and the soon to be published Notable Women¹⁴ In American Theatre, a biographical encyclopedia.

Although the above literature on women in American theatre has been an invaluable resource for this study, none has specifically pinpointed the numerical rise of women directors in commercial New York theatre for the period 1920-1950 nor exclusively tried to evaluate the contributory factors involved in that rise.

Methodology

The first step in preparing this study of the rise of the woman director on Broadway was to statistically illustrate this phenomenon. Since the impetus for this study was sparked by the notation of the large number of women included in the appendix listing of New York directors, 1894-1950, in the Cox dissertation, the present investigation¹⁵ began there. A complete list of all the women included was extracted. Those names listed with only initials or with

generic first names, such Val or Lynn, were checked against biographical indexes, or in some cases reviews, to determine the sex of the individual.

In order to extend the statistical picture, a similar list of directors and productions was compiled for the period 1951-1983 using the same source as Cox, the Best Plays series¹⁶ for each year. As in the Cox list, only those productions that included the name of a director were used, and operas, ice shows, and dance concerts were excluded. Using both lists, counts were made, by year, of the total number of productions listed and the total number of directors. Since some productions used two or more directors, the second number is greater for most years. Counts were then made of the number of productions, by year, listed under a woman's name. Percentages of plays directed by women were then calculated using these figures. Except for some minor fluctuations, this survey showed an obvious rise in the percentage of women directors after World War I. This number continued to rise through World War II but abruptly fell after 1950. Since such scholars as Robert Hazzard eliminated women directors from their studies on the grounds that they were primarily actresses or playwrights, notations were made of the authors, producers and whether the director also appeared as a performer. This information was also tabulated into a statistical summary. Both of these statistical charts are included in the text of Chapter III. The list of women

directors and their productions on which these charts are based will be found in the appendix of this study.

With this phenomenon documented, research for this study began with an investigation of existing scholarly work that might touch on this area. The studies listed previously in this chapter were read and bibliographies searched for ideas of further research material.

Before investigating the rise itself and the possible contributing factors, background research needed to be completed. This was done in two ways. First, historical and sociological works covering general information on the changes in social attitudes and treatment of women were read. Second, histories of the early American theatre were searched for information on the women pioneers in this field: the actresses-managers up to the end of the nineteenth century. Summation of this background material is found in Chapter II.

Work now centered on identifying and evaluating the possible factors that led to this rise and fall. Research began from the initial bibliography that had been extracted from other scholarly studies and was extended as new sources were identified. The Readers Periodical Index and the Humanities Index were consulted for articles by or about women, in particular directors, in the American theatre from 1895 to 1955.

Another primary source of material was located in the

variety of publications, labeled as "career guides" for women, which began appearing around 1900, and from books written for the general populace about theatre people and their occupations in theatre. Noting the changes in job descriptions, the inclusion or exclusion of particular job categories, and the recommendations for women provided an interesting picture of changing attitudes. Chapters III and IV discuss the changing role of women in theatre, and directing in particular, during this period.

Once these general theories were explored, there was a need to look more closely at some individual directors. Additional research was done on selected women who had been the most productive during the time period, 1920-1950. In particular, autobiographies, when available, were read and reviews of productions directed on Broadway were consulted. Additional material was located in the clippings files in the Theatre Collection of the New York Public Library. Finally, nine women (11 21, all American women directors who directed five or more Broadway productions during the period 1915-1950), whose lives reflected most of the struggles faced by all women directors, were chosen for comparison. The evaluation of their lives and work can be found in Chapter V.

This study is, in no way, meant to be exhaustive on this topic. It is meant to be a preliminary work for the later exploration of the continuing effort of women directors to reach the top of their field. Further investigation would

necessitate interviewing those persons, still living, who worked as directors or who had contact with women directors from this period. Access to personal writings, unpublished to date, of the women directors would be another source of continued research. And, perhaps more importantly, a study needs to be done on what happened to these and other women directors during the years after 1950--where did they go and why?

Chapter II reviews relevant background information regarding the development of the woman director in America. The chapter briefly discusses the history of the director in America, the actress-managers who were forerunners to the modern woman director, and the changes in society's attitudes towards women. Chapter III investigates women's slowly increasing role in the theatre from actresses to director and producer in the twentieth century. The chapter discusses the struggle and success of the women who sought other-than-acting careers and reviews the statistical surveys of women directors on Broadway. Chapter IV deals specifically with the contributory factors that led to the rise in the number of women directors. Chapter V reviews the lives and work of nine selected women directors: Jessie Bonafante, Rachel Crothers, Lillian Triable Bradley, Agnes Morgan, Eva LeGallienne, Antoinette Perry, Margaret Webster, Mary Hunter, and Margo Jones. Finally, the appendix contains a listing of the productions directed by women on Broadway from 1894-1983.

NOTES ON CHAPTER I

1

For complete statistical chart see Chapter III of this study, pp. 40-42.

2

A fifth factor was also identified--the siphoning off of men into the growing film industry. However, sufficient documentation was unavailable at the time to validate inclusion.

3

David R. Schaal, "Rehearsal-Direction Practices And Actor-Director Relationships In The American Theatre From The Hallama To Actors' Equity," Diss. University of Illinois 1956.

4

Charles Wright Cox, "The Evolution Of The Stage Director In America," Diss. Northwestern University 1957.

5

James Preston Cochran, "The Development Of The Professional Stage Director: A Critical-Historical Examination Of Representative Professional Directors Of The New York Stage, 1896-1916," Diss. University of Iowa 1958.

6

Charles Leo Metten, "The Development In America Of Theories Of Directing As Found In American Writings, 1914-1930," Diss. University of Iowa 1960.

7

Robert Tombaugh Hazzard, "The Development Of Selected American Stage Directors From 1916-1960," Diss. University of Minnesota 1962.

8

Helen Krich Chinoy, "The Impact Of The Stage Director On American Plays, Playwrights, And Theatres: 1860-1930," Diss. Columbia University 1963.

9

Ruth B. Manser, "The Influence Of The American Actress On The Development Of The American Theatre From 1835-1935," Diss. New York University 1938.

10

Merilyn D. Merende and James W. Polichak, eds., Speech Communication And Theatre Arts: A Classified Bibliography Of Theses and Dissertations, 1973-1978 (New York: IFI/Plenum, 1979).

11

Helen Krich Chinoy and Linda Walsh Jenkins, Women In American Theatre (New York: Crown Publishers, 1981), pp. 360-363.

12

Comprehensive Dissertation Index Ten-Year Cumulation: 1973-82 (Ann Arbor: University Microfilm International, 1984).

13

Chinoy and Jenkins; Karen Malpede, ed., Women In Theatre: Compassion And Hope (New York: Drama Book Publishers, 1983).

14

Albert Auster, Actresses And Suffragists: Women In The American Theater: 1890-1920 (New York: Praeger, 1984); Biographical index being compiled by Alice Robinson, University of Maryland.

15

Cox, pp. 183-448.

16

John Chapman, Garrison Sherwood, Otis L. Guernsey Jr., Henry Hewes, Louis Kronenberger, and Burns Mantle, eds., Best Plays, 65 vols. (1894-1983), (New York: Dodd, Mead and Co., 1928-1984).

CHAPTER II

Background

Before investigating the period 1920-1950 in which there was a significant rise in the number of women directors on Broadway, it would be well to review briefly some background material pertinent to this study. The first section is a general summary of the history of the American director with some particular notice to those situations which may have contributed to the delayed emergence of the woman director in commercial theatre. The second section examines those women who were the successful forerunners of the modern woman director. The third section is an overview of the changes in society's general attitudes towards women which may have influenced the development of the woman director.

History of the American Director

Although the first "Broadway theatre" opened December 16, 1732, it was a long time before New York City had its first "Broadway director," in the modern sense of the term. In the two hundred plus years of Broadway history, the direction of plays has been a constantly evolving art, often strongly influenced by the changes in both the business structure and the artistic nature of the theatre. To a degree women did participate in each of the phases of the

development of the director, but they did not find full acceptance until the final transition in the twentieth century.

The pioneer actor-managers emerged out of the early eighteenth century English companies. The theatre companies of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries were independent organizations. The manager, usually the leading actor, was financially and artistically responsible for the production; however, the companies differed in the amount of control the actor-manager had.

In the mid-nineteenth century stars became more independent and traveled to local resident stock companies which used the same actors and theatre. The local manager did the hiring and firing, chose the plays, and cast and staged them unless the visiting star took control. Some stars neglected rehearsals completely while others sent a marked prompt book to the resident manager so he might conduct preliminary rehearsals. Or, in some cases, the star's personal representative, stage manager or a supporting player might arrive a few days in advance to prepare the resident company.

After 1880 the dominant type of commercial production was the combination touring company, whose point of origin was New York City. In such a system the role of manager became more diversified. As the actors' interest shifted towards producing, the staging was turned over to a stage

manager.

As the complexity of productions and rehearsals increased, the role of the stage manager/director became more important. Theatre books from the turn of the century, such as Franklin Fyles' The Theater And Its People (1900), described the type of man needed for this new type of work:

The hardest work of the director . . . is that of making the actors carry out the author's intention fully. . . . But the majority of the actors are mere puppets in the hands of the man who conducts the rehearsals. His word is their law. . . . So the stage director is an autocrat, and he may be a tyrant. He is a master of stagecraft, and he may be a dramatic scholar. 1

As the demand for theatrical realism decreased after 1910, the requirements for a director changed. Later theatre books moved away from stressing the autocrat to discussing intelligence, diplomacy and an understanding of playwriting, as the necessary qualities.

Another major influence on theatrical practice during the period 1895-1910 was the change in business management as typified by the Theatrical Syndicate. The Syndicate became the major employer of directors in New York City. They demanded directors trained in the style of the most popular productions, those using realism and spectacle, and they did not usually hire women. A list of Syndicate-owned New York City theatres for 1903 contained the names of nine theatres; none of the productions at these theatres during
2
that year were directed by a woman. By 1929, only A. L.

Erlanger remained as manager of the Syndicate and he still controlled fourteen Broadway theatres. Even then, a comparison of the names of Syndicate-owned theatres for the 1928-1929 season produced the name of only one woman director---Antoinette Perry who co-directed Hotbed with Brock Pemberton.³

After 1910 the Shubert brothers came to the aid of those battling the Syndicate's control. Unlike the Syndicate, the Shubert organization did hire women directors. By the mid-1920s the Shubert organization was the largest single producer of theatrical productions.⁴

The growth of the business manager as producer and of his power in the theatre was to have a permanent impact on New York theatre. Commercial theatre (1915-1929) began to be described in terms of "boom or bust" with little reverence for quality.⁵ Although this business-first outlook may have been detrimental to artistic quality, it did provide jobs by the hundreds. During the 1927-28 season New York producers hired 184 different directors, sixty-four of whom directed more than one production during that season.⁶

The period 1910-1940 saw the rise of the artistic-minded director inspired by a new breed of playwrights. European ideas had begun to seep into the American consciousness and a new intellectual movement was growing. This new movement called for theatre as a total experience under the control of one director. The movement towards artistic direction, which

was to begin in the Little Theatre/Art Theatre productions, took some years to penetrate the commercial theatre.

The changes in the role of the director in the American theatre were reflected in the changed job descriptions in career guides for the theatre profession. No longer was the call for an autocrat but for a diplomat--a change that was to be important for women. Further, Arthur Krows' book, Play Production In America (1916), clearly shows the need for extensive training before entering the directing field:

Frequently a producer recognizes the need of having a technical expert to establish the correctness of decorative periods, or a super-electrician to achieve a psychological triumph in lighting, but is forced to forego them because his exchequer will not sustain them all. It is then that the director has to step into the breach and do the work ideally intrusted to his assistants. 7

Krows' book also indicated that an apprenticeship as stage manager provided excellent training:

In practically every case I have encountered, the stage manager is a studious young man, anxious to learn his art to the full, and undertaking this mainly because of the executive experience in it. One finds him of keen technical knowledge as a rule, and frequently with ambitious ideas which he hopes to execute some day in an ideal theatre of his own. His office has been the responsible, if humble, position in which most of our great stage directors have served their apprenticeships. 8

James Cochran's study of ten prominent directors of the early twentieth century confirmed the pattern of training: eight out of the ten had worked as stage managers prior to becoming

directors. In addition, Robert Hazzard's comparable review of twelve male directors, 1926-60, showed backgrounds that included prior experience as an actor and/or as a stage manager (with the exception of two who began as playwrights).¹⁰ However, stage management was a career often¹¹ closed to women.

By the 1930s there was far less stress on technical knowledge and more emphasis on interpretive and psychological skills. In any event, the growth of the stagehand and designer unions barred most directors from directly participating in the technical areas of a productions. Since women were traditionally assumed to be naturally intuitive and not technically inclined, this shift of emphasis away from the latter eased the way for them to enter the directing field. Therefore, although the modern American male director emerged in the 1890s, the modern American woman director would not appear until the 1910s.

The Actress-Manager in America

The history of the development of the modern director suggests that women found it difficult to achieve acceptance as directors. Men dominated the theatre throughout the nineteenth century. Nevertheless, there were women managers prior to 1910 and many of them made significant contributions to the theatre. These early actress-managers were the forerunners of the modern woman director.

Through marriage, some early American actresses found opportunities for management, either sharing the workload as a partner to their actor-manager husbands or as sole proprietor upon the death of their husbands. Widows Mrs. Wignell of the Chestnut Street Theatre, Mrs. Hallam of the American Company in Jamaica, and Mrs. Placide of Charleston all managed theatre companies in the eighteenth century. These opportunities were usually temporary in nature. Societal pressure usually led to remarriage and, again, subordination.

There were occasional instances of non-widowed managers. In 1790 two actresses, Ann Robinson and Susannah Wall, were invited by the Mens' Dramatic Society of Augusta, Georgia to manage a new theatre. This project lasted only one year.

In the mid-nineteenth century social acceptability for women in theatre improved in part because of the work of Anna Cora Mowatt, a woman of society and a playwright. Although most known for her play, *Fashion*, Mowatt did tour for nine years as a leading actress.

The other powerful female figure in the American theatre in the early nineteenth century was Charlotte Cushman. In 1842 she signed a contract as stage manager of the Walnut Street Theatre in Philadelphia. This engagement appears to have lasted for only one season. Cushman continued to play leading roles both here and in England until her death in 1876. As a single woman, her exemplary life and popularity

helped to pave the way for other actresses.

There were two major female theatrical figures of the late nineteenth century: Mrs. John Drew and Laura Keane. Louisa Lane Drew (1810-1897) managed the Arch Street Theatre in Philadelphia for thirty years beginning in 1861. Her management was characterized by the presentation of quality plays at low prices--an ideal later espoused by a number of
12
twentieth century women directors.

Laura Keane (1820-1873) began her management career in 1853 in Baltimore. After touring California and Australia, she returned to New York City and opened the Laura Keane Theatre in 1856. She wanted to produce good American plays, but few existed. She did produce Our American Cousin in 1858 which to that date was the longest running play in a first class theatre. This success was followed by The Seven Sisters in 1860 which broke the records for longest continuous playing production. The economics of the Civil War forced her to close her theatre in 1863. In 1871 she opened the Fourteenth Street Theatre, but she died shortly thereafter in 1873.

In addition to Drew and Keane, there were other lesser known women managers and directors throughout the United States in the nineteenth century. Catherine Sinclair, the former wife of Edwin Forrest, managed the Metropolitan Theatre in San Francisco in 1853. Mary Provost took over management of Wallacks' old theatre on Broome Street in New

York City and presented John Wilkes Booth in a series of classics. Jessie Shirley toured the Pacific Northwest with her own company. In 1863 Mrs. John Wood took over management of Laura Keane's theatre, renaming it the Olympic. From the 1870s to 1900, Francesca Janauschek and Helen Modjeska produced a number of plays in the United States. Alice Bates headed her own touring company from 1869-1886. Helen Dauvray led a company at the Lyceum in New York City in the 1880s and Mrs. W. B. English was the manager of the Tremont Theatre in Boston.

Into the early twentieth century women continued to fill the dual role of actress and manager. Julia Marlowe, born in England in 1865, produced her first play in the United States at the age of twenty-one. She toured the United States with her own Shakespearean company, co-starring with E. L. Southern. She insisted on playing at popular prices and turned down a number of highly commercial acting offers to continue doing so.

Another prominent turn-of-the-century actress-manager was Mary Shaw. As an actress she became well known for her roles in George Bernard Shaw's Mrs. Warren's Profession and Henrik Ibsen's Ghosts and Hedda Gabler which she played both in New York and on tour. In 1902 she briefly co-managed a theatre in Baltimore. A strong supporter of women's causes, Shaw was a charter member of the Professional Women's League and the American theatre representative to the International

Congress of Women in London in 1899. As she toured she gave lectures to women's groups and soon her suffragist work superseded her commercial theatre career. Shaw began writing, directing and acting in short plays for suffragist organizations. In 1913 she founded the Gamut Club for theatre women. She also tried to establish the Woman's National Theatre with Jessie Bonstelle. Mary Shaw died in 1919--a crusader who sacrificed a successful acting career for political beliefs.

As Julia Marlowe was known for Shakespeare and Mary Shaw for Ibsen and Shaw, Margaret Anglin was known for promoting revivals of the Greek classics. In 1910 Anglin directed four plays for the Greek Tragedy Festival at Berkeley and later produced Electra at the Metropolitan Opera. Afterwards, she turned to Shakespeare and received notice for utilizing the forestage for playing, an unusual idea in 1914. Like Laura Keane, Anglin would have preferred to produce more American works but resistance from producers was great.

Other minor female figures of the early twentieth century attempted to produce plays in New York. Maxine Elliott owned and managed her own theatre in New York City from 1905-1908. Grace George managed the Playhouse, built by her producer-husband William Brady in 1910, and also struggled to produce American works. Rene Harris, widow of producer Henry B. Harris, managed the Hudson, Harris and Fulton theatres after her husband's death in 1912.

The reigning female figure of this period, and the one whose preeminence even most male scholars are willing to acknowledge, was Minnie Maddern Fiske. In addition to co-management of the Manhattan Theatre Company with her husband from 1904-1910, Fiske directed forty-two plays in the twenty year apex of her career, 1896-1916. She is credited with discovering the playwrights Langdon Mitchell, Harry James Smith, Mrs. Burton Harrison, and Edward Sheldon as well as being responsible for making Ibsen a commercial success. She¹³ was a quiet director and known for her attention to detail and for the strong ensemble acting of her casts. In fact, she was more than willing to play a small role to properly balance the casting of a production. Fiske's productions won consistent critical acclaim. Minnie Maddern Fiske solidified the ground work laid by Mowat, Cushman, Drew, Keene, Marlowe, Shaw, and Anglin and further paved the way for future women directors and producers to find acceptability in commercial theatre in New York City.

Changes in Society's View of Women

A factor contributing to the emergence of the woman director in America in the twentieth century was the changing status of women in general. Woman's place in society--the attitudes of men and women and the opportunities available to women--has been a constantly changing phenomenon.

The rise of feminism began in the mid-nineteenth

century but was forestalled by war. With the outbreak of the Civil War, women found opportunities to participate in some traditional male occupations for the first time. When the men returned from war, they resumed their old occupations and supplanted the temporary women workers. However, the war had been costly in lives taken and consequently had created an excess female population. Many of these women continued the struggle for equality and careers.

In the late nineteenth century, educational opportunities for women increased. A number of women's colleges were founded: Vassar in 1865, Smith in 1875, Wellesley in 1875, and Bryn Mawr in 1885. By 1890, 35.9 percent of college¹⁴ students were women. Consequently, by the early 1900s American society faced an ever increasing, highly educated, female population with few outlets for their skills. For the most part, these women were white and from middle and upper class backgrounds; most married but tended to have fewer children than had earlier generations. Therefore, society was faced with a declining birthrate amongst the "most desirable" part of the population and, consequently, reaction set in. Articles began appearing in magazines glorifying motherhood. Young women were cautioned against higher¹⁵ education because it would ruin them for motherhood.

This conservative reaction did not last for long. The period 1912-1917 has been identified by many historians as a¹⁶ time of major intellectual change. During this early

twentieth century renaissance, the Little Theatre movement and the attendant rise of the woman director began.

During the 1910s the ideas of socialism and feminism became popular amongst the intellectual elite. Feminists banded together to campaign for voting rights, birth control and general social reform. Just as the Civil War had interrupted the feminist tide in the nineteenth century, so World War I did in 1918, but this time the interruption was briefer. A United States Labor Department bulletin's description of the impact of World War I on women in the workforce is indicative of the effect of most wars:

The emergencies of war sweep aside established traditions and customary ways of doing things, With the increased need for manpower and the siphoning off of men for military duties, women are called upon to undertake various tasks generally considered unsuitable for them. Peacetime readjustments bring a tendency to revert to the prewar situation but inevitably an extension of the range of occupations open to women takes place. 17

Instead of disbanding, feminists merely rechanneled their activities to war relief and, almost immediately thereafter, reverted to their initial cause. With the passage of voting rights for women in 1919, many women retired from activism.

Attitudes toward women in the 1920s were divided. There was still an excess number of females in the population including a large block of single women who had migrated to urban centers in search of work. A number of books were written about the "working girl," giving them advice on finding the right career. The single working woman began to

enjoy social freedoms previously unknown to females; however, attitudes towards married women were still bound in tradition. A survey conducted in the early 1920s showed that sixty-five percent of the men agreed that married women should not work outside the home.¹⁸

In spite of such attitudes, by 1930 twelve percent of married women worked; and single women, particularly those with college educations, were beginning to obtain management positions.¹⁹ However, the Depression put a dent in this career growth. With fewer positions available, women were asked to sacrifice their own careers and give the needed positions to men who had families to support. In some states legislation was actually passed forbidding married women from holding certain types of occupations. Perhaps because the stage was not looked upon as regular employment, the women in theatre escaped the effects of this change in attitudes. Later, as the country grew out of the Depression and the threat of war in Europe loomed, these restrictions eased.

America's entry into World War II liberalized attitudes towards women. "Rosie the Riveter" became a hero rather than a threat. Because of the lengthy duration of the United States' involvement in the war and the number of men shipped overseas, women gained considerable ground in the job market. Instead of rolling bandages and selling war bonds--the World War I image--women built the planes and managed the economy. After the war, thousands of heroes came home to

parades and generous veterans' benefits. Women were thanked for their contributions, but were expected to return quietly to their homes and motherhood. Veterans were given job preference and priority admission to colleges. The ideal woman as promoted by magazines, films and television became the white middle-class housewife living in suburban comfort with a large family. By 1955 the return to "normalcy" was complete and the effect on women directors was devastating. In 1950 thirteen percent of the Broadway productions had been directed by women; in 1955 the figure was zero.

The period 1850-1950 clearly reflected the constantly changing attitudes and opportunities for women. A pattern emerged of intellectual growth and activism interrupted by war and followed by a period of restriction. The rise of the woman director clearly fit into this cycle. The rise came out of the new intellectualism of the 1910s. World War I opened new opportunities in some occupational fields. Because of the economic prosperity in the 1920s restrictions were not reimposed; there seemed to be enough opportunity for everyone. The Depression brought a short term decline--men came first economically. The build up for World War II required all available workers and women made great progress in the job market in the 1940s. But post-war America needed a strong sense of stability after the deprivation of the 1930s and the horrors of war. There was a nostalgic yearning to return to traditional values and women became the victims

of this desire. Not until the renewed resurgence of feminism in the late 1960s and early 1970s would women be able to achieve the heights of economic power they had during the 1940s. And not until the late 1970s would the number of women directors on Broadway again significantly increase.

NOTES ON CHAPTER II

- 1 Franklin Fyles, The Theater And Its People (New York: Doubleday, Page and Co., 1900), pp. 152-155.
- 2 Alfred L. Bernheim, The Business Of The Theater (New York: Actors' Equity Association, 1932), p. 51.
- 3 Bernheim, p. 73; Burns Mantle, ed., Best Plays, 1928-29 ed. (New York: Dodd, Mead and Co., 1929).
- 4 Jack Poggi, Theatre In America: The Impact Of Economic Forces, 1870-1967 (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1968), p. 21.
- 5 Poggi, pp. 50-51.
- 6 Bernheim, p. 118.
- 7 Arthur E. Krows, Play Production In America (New York: Henry Holt and Co., 1916), p. 68.
- 8 Krows, p. 231.
- 9 James Preston Cochran, "The Development Of The Professional Stage Director: A Critical-Historical Examination Of Representative Professional Directors On The New York Stage, 1896-1916," Diss. Univ. of Iowa 1958, p. 381.

10 Robert Tombaugh Hazzard, "The Development Of Selected American Stage Directors From 1926 to 1960," Diss. University of Minnesota 1962, p. 301.

11 See Chapter III, pp. 35, 38-39.

12 See Chapter V, pp. 70, 81, 92-96.

13 Ruth B. Manser, "The Influence Of The American Actress On The Development Of The American Theatre From 1835-1935," Diss. New York University 1938, p. 184.

14 Albert Auster, Actresses And Suffragists: Women In The American Theater, 1890-1920 (New York: Praeger, 1984), p. 40.

15 Maxine L. Margolis, Mothers And Such (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984), p. 46.

16 Auster, p. 3.

17 Janet M. Hooks, Woman's Occupations Through Seven Decades, Women's Bureau Bulletin 218 (Washington DC: GPO, 1947), p. 10.

18 Margolis, p. 206.

19 Margolis, p. 41.

20 See statistical summary in Chapter III, pp. 40-42.

CHAPTER III

Women in Theatre, 1900-1950

As the changes in society's attitudes towards women were slow in coming, so too were changes in theatre for women seeking careers. At first women were usually accepted only as actresses. As other occupations were created by the growing complexities of theatre, women found resistance to their employment in non-acting positions. Eventually, by the 1920s, a few women managed to overcome various prejudices that barred them from business, technical, and directorial careers in theatre. This chapter will review the struggle and success of women who sought careers in theatre in the early twentieth century. In particular, this chapter will statistically illustrate the rise of the woman director on Broadway.

As the social respectability of the theatre improved in the late nineteenth century, more women entered the acting profession. Olive Logan, writing in the 1860s and 1870s, encouraged women to look upon theatre as the one place where¹ they could achieve equality and independence. Many women must have heeded this call because in the period 1870-1880 the number of actresses increased 596 percent; and from 1890-1900, the number was up another 332 percent.² These women came from all walks of life. Prior to 1880, most actresses

had descended from acting families or were drawn from children of immigrants and working class poor, but by 1880, middle and upper class women were being drawn into the profession. For example, Augustin Daly used to hire socially prominent debutantes to attract larger audiences.

Before 1900, the theatre was still predominantly an actors' theatre; managers had only lately gained a stronghold. In the nineteenth century, when people considered a theatre career, they meant acting. Since plays required both actors and actresses, equality seemed easily attainable. In 1897 the New York Dramatic Mirror, published by Harrison Grey Fiske, recommended the theatre to those women seeking professional equality:

One phase of the question as to women and the stage will bear repeated reference and reiterated declaration. While women win distinction as befits their ability in literature; while a few of the gentler sex succeed--but none of them without some loss at least of self respect--in journalism of the day; while occasionally the eye is saluted by the shingle of a woman M.D. whose practice necessarily must be special; and while the occasional woman not only creates a sensation for the public but also amazes her furtively glancing colleagues at bench and bar as a lawyer, the theatre alone of all the institutions of civilization offers to her sisters a field in which they may and do stand absolutely on an equality with men. 3

This is not to say everything was, in fact, equal. Acting, particularly for a woman, was for the young. A survey based on the biographies of 143 actors showed that in 1900 48.8 percent of the working actresses were age sixteen

to twenty-four, another 36.7 percent were between twenty-five and thirty-four years of age. Men in the age twenty-four and under category only equaled 24.2 percent of those employed while 58.7 percent were in the older, twenty-five to thirty-four age bracket.⁴ Youthful looks and vitality were important to women. Marriage may have shortened many actresses' careers or may have been the refuge for those who were past their professional prime.

Other aspects of turn of the century theatre also affected women in a negative manner. As theatre became a big business run for commercial investment, its growing complexity called for specialization in work. A career in theatre no longer automatically meant just acting, but the diversification into business-oriented and technical positions only created more opportunities for discrimination as far as women were concerned. According to business manager M. B. Leavitt, in 1912 in New York City there were only three women theatrical agents, no women press agents, no women dramatic critics, and no women stage managers.⁵ On the other hand, the rise of the respectability of the acting profession had flooded the stage with young women seeking theatrical careers. The ratio as estimated by one New York agent was twenty-five women to one man.⁶ However, for those not successful in acting or for those who desired more power over their work, it was difficult to shift into other theatrical careers, except perhaps playwriting.

Eventually, matters did slowly improve. A 1918 New York Times article on the business status of 16,739 women college graduates showed that of the 11,668 who were working, eleven were actresses while ten were producers, managers, acting coaches or other entertainers. Interestingly, those who had found work in the theatre had the highest median income of all women surveyed. Nevertheless, the male predominance in non-acting fields pervaded. A United States government survey in 1940 showed that sixty-five percent of the women in the entertainment field were either actresses or dancers, while only ten percent of the men were performers.

Beyond statistics, a picture of career opportunities for women can be found in magazine articles and books offering career advice for women. Of course, the majority of this written material dealt with acting. Everyone from David Belasco to chorus girls had advice for the stage-struck young woman. Acting was a glamorous profession but aspirants were sternly warned that the profession was already overcrowded:

Of comely, intelligent, and tolerably facile actresses, the supply is far in excess of the demand. That being so, there is no chance at all for those who have mistaken taste for talent. . . . 9

Of course good looks finally wear out, and later on talent counts for more than beauty. But in starting out in a stage career, the latter counts first with the manager, who never having seen your work, does see and feel your personality, and the young woman who fills his eyes has a greater chance over her plainer and perhaps more competent sister. 10

Women were also warned of the realities of the profession. Although salaries looked attractive, in the days before Actors' Equity actors often had to supply their own costumes, were not paid for rehearsals and, in vaudeville, had to pay their own travel expenses and royalties on material used in their acts. Later career advice books for women were not much more optimistic. A 1921 book detailed the training available but recommended a career in non-commercial theatre.¹¹ A 1933 publication listed colleges offering degrees in theatre but suggested that teaching was the best theatre career choice for women.¹²

For those women seeking non-acting careers in theatre, the opportunities were slow in coming. During World War I women were hired as theatre ushers for the first time. After the war this occupation remained open to them. In related theatre business fields, women encountered businessmen who were still unsure of a woman's ability to deal with pressure:

In the smaller houses and the legitimate theatres where there is not a great rush, women have proven themselves very capable (as box office treasurers); but at some vaudeville houses where there is apt to be a big crowd morning and night they have "lost their heads" and have not been as successful as men.¹³

For those women interested in backstage positions, the situation was not any more optimistic than in the business areas of theatre. With the growth of realism, the technical side of theatre became extremely important. Although the emphasis on complex scenery decreased, the complexities of

set construction and lighting continued to develop. Specialists were now needed in the technical field and eventually the unions moved in to control these positions. A career advice book in 1919 interviewed the only woman scenic artist in the United States--Mabel Buell. Her work was comparable to that now done by a set designer, a painter and a technical director combined. She noted that "it requires a girl with almost a masculine mind and constitution to stand the work."¹⁴ She warned it was very difficult to get started in the profession. For one thing, theatrical managers hated having women work on scaffolding. Buell concluded that a person had to know someone willing to help in order to break into the field. There was no other training available.

Career guides in the 1930s showed some improvement of opportunities in the technical field. Aline Bernstein, a designer, warned that scene design was strenuous work but suitable to the female mind.¹⁵ The method of entry was apprenticeship. Maud Howell, who worked as a technical director and then a stage manager, was used as an example in a 1933 text which recommended technical direction as a good career for women.¹⁶ However, her job description does not match the current definition of the position. Apparently, in 1933 a technical director only planned and purchased the furniture and accessories to decorate the set.

However, for women who hoped for future work in directing, working as a stage manager was imperative. In New

York women had begun to break into stage management by the 1920s primarily through the women directors of the Civic Repertory Theatre and the Theatre Guild. Nevertheless, finding employment in stage management continued to be difficult for women. The difficulties were exemplified by a 1942 Collier's magazine article which glorified stage manager Betty Arnold as the "Backstage Beauty"--a Rosie-the-Riveter comparison.¹⁷ Arnold was the first woman to stage manage a Broadway musical and inherited the position from her husband, who had enlisted in the army. In a 1954 interview, stage manager Ruth Mitchell warned that there was still a strong prejudice against female stage managers.¹⁸

If barriers existed in the business and technical theatre occupations, they were even stronger for the positions of producer and director. In 1918 Nation magazine discussed the lack of female producers and directors:

As producers women have not yet exerted any marked influence on the American stage, although their executive ability, their sense of detail and character, and their knowledge of costume and color ought to prove valuable assets here. Mrs. Fiske, brilliant as an actress, has often been an intelligent producer of her own plays, but few of the younger women aspire to command in the difficult field.¹⁹

However, the problem may not have been lack of aspiration that held women back so much as the lack of training available to them. Normally training was acquired while working as a stage manager, and women were often excluded from this occupation.²⁰

In spite of the difficulties with training and entrance to the directing field, some women did succeed. Prior to 1920 the percentage of Broadway productions directed by women averaged 2.84 percent. In the period after 1950 there was only a slight improvement to an average percentage of 3.40. However, during the peak years, 1920-1950, an average of 7.38 percent of the Broadway productions were directed by women; this figure is more than double the average percentage of the periods either before or after these peak years. The following chart, based on the Burns Mantle Best Plays yearbook series, illustrates the changing percentages of women directors on Broadway:

STATISTICAL SUMMARY OF BROADWAY DIRECTORS
1894-1983

Year	No. of Plays	No. of Directors	No. of Males	No. of Females	% of Plays with a Female Director	% of Total No. of Directors
1894	31	32	31	1	3.23	3.13
1895	48	50	48	2	4.17	4.00
1896	48	48	48	0	0	0
1897	46	50	49	1	2.17	2.00
1898	38	38	37	1	2.63	2.63
1899	41	43	42	1	2.44	2.33
1900	32	33	32	1	3.13	3.03
1901	30	35	34	1	3.33	2.86
1902	49	56	51	5	10.20	8.93
1903	52	58	58	0	0	0
1904	54	60	60	0	0	0
1905	45	55	55	0	0	0
1906	52	59	58	1	1.92	1.70
1907	61	66	65	1	1.64	1.52
1908	72	77	75	2	2.78	2.60
1909	90	93	91	2	2.22	2.15
1910	87	88	87	1	1.15	1.14
1911	84	88	83	5	5.95	5.68

Year	No. of Plays	No. of Directors	No. of Males	No. of Females	% of Plays With A Female Director	% of Total
1912	105	110	108	2	1.91	1.82
1913	106	113	108	5	4.72	4.43
1914	106	112	109	3	2.83	2.68
1915	95	104	104	0	0	0
1916	92	101	97	4	4.35	3.96
1917	115	129	126	3	2.61	2.33
1918	119	140	134	6	5.04	4.29
1919	63	71	69	2	3.18	2.82
1920	87	94	90	4	4.60	4.26
1921	125	141	133	8	6.40	5.67
1922	124	138	131	7	5.65	5.07
1923	109	118	113	5	4.59	4.24
1924	70	74	67	7	10.00	9.46
1925	210	229	220	9	4.29	3.93
1926	219	245	231	14	6.39	5.71
1927	229	247	235	12	5.24	4.86
1928	243	268	245	23	9.47	8.58
1929	215	241	226	15	6.98	6.22
1930	196	224	210	14	7.14	6.25
1931	174	187	170	17	9.77	9.09
1932	177	190	179	11	6.22	5.79
1933	148	157	149	8	5.41	5.10
1934	167	181	171	10	5.99	5.53
1935	141	149	136	13	9.22	8.73
1936	122	142	133	9	7.38	6.34
1937	111	116	104	12	10.81	10.35
1938	114	120	111	9	7.90	7.50
1939	96	102	95	7	7.29	6.86
1940	80	86	79	7	8.75	8.14
1941	74	76	72	4	5.41	5.26
1942	91	100	94	6	6.59	6.00
1943	79	81	73	8	10.13	9.88
1944	101	106	98	8	7.92	7.55
1945	83	86	78	8	9.64	9.30
1946	91	95	84	11	12.09	11.58
1947	85	98	95	3	3.53	3.06
1948	75	76	66	10	13.33	13.16
1949	47	49	46	3	6.38	6.12
1950	76	78	68	10	13.16	12.82
1951	73	74	70	4	5.48	5.41
1952	66	69	67	2	3.03	2.90
1953	63	65	63	2	3.18	3.08
1954	54	56	54	2	3.70	3.57
1955	60	60	60	0	0	0
1956	68	69	69	0	0	0
1957	62	64	64	0	0	0

Year	No. of Plays	No. of Directors	No. of Males	No. of Females	% of Plays with a Female Director	% of Total Directors
1958	63	63	62	1	1.59	1.59
1959	56	57	56	1	1.79	1.75
1960	63	64	62	2	3.18	3.13
1961	54	54	53	1	1.85	1.85
1962	55	55	53	2	3.64	3.64
1963	64	65	64	1	1.56	1.54
1964	91	93	90	3	3.30	3.23
1965	61	64	62	2	3.28	3.13
1966	71	72	70	2	2.82	2.78
1967	67	72	67	5	7.46	6.94
1968	77	79	79	0	0	0
1969	54	56	53	3	5.56	5.36
1970	65	65	62	3	4.62	4.62
1971	48	49	47	2	4.17	4.08
1972	62	62	60	2	3.23	3.23
1973	56	56	55	1	1.79	1.79
1974	57	57	55	2	3.51	3.51
1975	59	59	58	1	1.70	1.70
1976	72	73	72	1	1.39	1.37
1977	48	50	45	5	10.42	10.00
1978	41	42	39	3	7.32	7.14
1979	62	66	63	3	4.84	4.55
1980	66	66	62	4	6.06	6.06
1981	53	54	50	4	7.55	7.41
1982	45	46	43	3	6.67	6.52
1983	42	43	42	1	2.38	2.33
TOTAL	7718	8242	7832	410	5.31	4.97

In tracing the development of the woman director on Broadway it is interesting to note the changes in personnel with whom these women worked. The chart that follows summarizes these changes in ten-year increments beginning in 1894. In some cases there were more than one author and/or producer, therefore the percentages may equal more than one hundred percent for that time period. In the period 1894-1903 almost half the women who directed Broadway productions

did so alone; the other half had male co-directors. By the period 1924-1933, this ratio had significantly changed. Seventy-nine percent of the women directed alone, fifteen percent had a male co-director, and six percent co-directed with other women. During 1944-1953, eighty-six percent of the women directed alone while fourteen percent had either a male or female co-director. These figures would seem to indicate a growing reliance on women to direct commercial productions on their own.

It might be supposed that in the early years women directors were often hired primarily to direct women's plays or that they directed in order to get their own plays produced. Yet statistics show a continued predominance of male-authored scripts. In the period 1894-1903, ninety-two percent of the scripts directed by women had been written by men. The remaining seven percent were authored by other women and none by the director herself. During 1920-1950 the percentage of male-authored scripts varied from sixty-two to seventy-eight percent, while the number of female playwrights had risen.

There were also changes in the percentages that reflected the kind of producers with whom women directors worked. The period 1894-1903 represents the transitional period in which control passed from actor-managers to business manager-producers; therefore, the percentages were far different from those in the periods that followed. Since

Burns Mantle did not record the names of producers for thirty-one percent of the productions directed by women in this time period, these figures are incomplete. Available figures from 1894-1903, indicate that thirty-five percent of all productions directed by women were produced by the woman director herself and the remaining thirty percent were produced by men. By the period 1924-33 a major change had occurred. The major producers of plays directed by women on Broadway were men (forty-three percent), such as the Shuberts, and theatre companies (forty-one percent), such as the Theatre Guild and the Civic Repertory Theatre. A number of these companies had origins in the Little Theatre movement and/or were established by women. During the period 1944-1953 there was a marked increase in the number of women producers (twenty-three percent) including those who directed in addition to producing. The male producers still predominated at fifty-seven percent while the theatre companies continued to produce plays (thirty-two percent) directed by women.

At the turn of the century, women often directed the plays in which they appeared. During the time period 1894-1903, in seventy-one percent of those productions recorded in Best Plays, the woman director also appeared as an actress. However, by the 1924-1933 period the figure was down to thirty-eight percent and by 1944-1953 it was down to thirteen percent. Both of these later figures would be even lower if

those productions directed by Eva LeGallienne were excluded; LeGallienne was the most prolific actress-director of the time period.

The following chart is a summary of the findings detailed in the appendix listing of women directors and their productions on Broadway. The chart is meant to show general trends in working relationships and is broken into ten-year periods. Divisions include: 1) Co-director--whether one existed or not; 2) Author/Adapter--the writer of the performed script, whether an original, translation or adaptation; 3) Producer--whether an individual, a theatre company or unrecorded; and 4) Also acted--an indicator of whether the director also appeared in the cast:²²

	1894- 1903	1904- 1913	1914- 1923	1924- 1933	1934- 1943	1944- 1953	1954- 1963	1964- 1973	1974- 1983
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CO-DIR.

None	46%	63%	67%	79%	84%	86%	100%	100%	82%
Female	---	---	---	6%	---	7%	---	---	7%
Male	54%	37%	33%	15%	16%	7%	---	---	11%

AUTHOR/ ADAPTER

Self	---	26%	38%	22%	9%	15%	20%	26%	44%
Female	7%	21%	10%	22%	19%	27%	10%	17%	22%
Male	92%	53%	62%	68%	78%	63%	80%	70%	52%

1894- 1903	1904- 1913	1914- 1923	1924- 1933	1934- 1943	1944- 1953	1954- 1963	1964- 1973	1974- 1983
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PRODUCER

Self	35%	11%	14%	7%	12%	10%	---	4%	---
Female	---	5%	7%	2%	6%	13%	10%	13%	33%
Male	30%	79%	62%	43%	67%	57%	60%	74%	93%
Company	---	---	17%	41%	18%	32%	50%	26%	22%
Unknown	31%	5%	5%	3%	1%	---	---	---	---

ALSOACTED

Yes	71%	47%	26%	38%	11%	13%	---	35%	11%
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As further evidence of the emergence of the woman director, public awareness of the growing success of women was promoted by articles in popular magazines. A 1920 Ladies Home Journal article featured Rene Harris, manager of the Hudson Theatre; Lillian Trimble Bradley, general stage director for the Broadhurst Theatre; Mme. Benedicte Rasini, director; Mrs. Sidney Drew, film director and actress; Lois Weber, film director; Elizabeth Marbury, play broker; and Edith Dunham Foster, film editor. Articles about women producers became popular during the 1940s; among the women featured were Katharine Cornell, Cheryl Crawford, Theresa Helburn, Eva LeGallienne, and Carly Wharton. A 1946 article in Independent Women discussed the influence of the woman producer in the American theatre:

Few indeed are the women who have attempted play producing in the American theatre. Those who have succeeded are, however, among our outstanding entrepreneurs. In a profession peopled largely by shrewd businessmen, these women have, for the most part, sponsored productions to appeal to people who take the theatre a little more seriously than those who merely patronize the hits of the moment. And they have made money at it. 24

Further, in 1952 Theatre Arts noted that during the 1951 season one-third of the New York plays were produced or
25
co-produced by women.

Although in the 1900s there may have been little work other than acting for women in theatre, by 1947 the situation had clearly changed as shown by a Theatre Arts magazine article which listed prominent women in the theatre. While noting that acting was still the predominant career choice, the article talked also of playwrights (Rachel Crothers and Lillian Hellman), directors (Antoinette Perry and Margaret Webster), designers (Aline Bernstein and Peggy Clark), critics (Willella Waldorf), and managers (Theresa Helburn, Cheryl Crawford, Margaret Webster, Beatrice Straight, and
26
Penelope Slope).

The numerous pendulum swings of attitudes towards women so evident in the general population were not always as apparent in the theatre's attitudes toward its own. In the theatre there was more of a steady, albeit slow, increase in career opportunities following World War I. In fact, since the beginning of the American theatre, women entering the

acting profession encountered few obstacles except, perhaps, the question of social respectability. Eventually a few strong-minded and talented actresses even became managers of their own companies. However, when the twentieth century introduced the increased complexity and diversification of theatre production and business, women found limited employment in certain non-acting professions.²⁷ Almost all of the commercial producers and union officials were male, and they controlled who was or was not trained and hired in any particular field. A woman needed exceptional talent and perseverance to either locate a sympathetic male mentor or to wrest some power for herself, often by creating her own theatre company. By following either or both of these two methods, women began eventually to reach the top in their field as directors and producers in increasing numbers during 1920-1950. Only in these positions would women be able to control, and therefore affect, the quality of theatre they often sought.

NOTES ON CHAPTER III

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- 4 Benjamin McArthur, Actors And The American Culture, 1880-1920 (Philadelphia: Temple Univ. Press, 1984), p. 29.
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- 8 Janet M. Hooks, Women's Occupations Through Seven Decades, Women's Bureau Bulletin 218 (Washington, DC: GPO, 1947), p. 48.
- 9 Franklin Fyles, The Theater And Its People (New York: Doubleday, Page and Co., 1900), p. 38.

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CVI (1918), p. 665.

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Charles Wright Cox, "The Evolution Of The Stage Director In America," *Diss. Northwestern University* 1957, pp. 183-448; John Chapman, Otis L. Guernsey Jr., Henry Hewes, and Louis Kronenberger, eds., Best Plays (New York: Dodd, Mead and Co., 1951-1984), 34 vols. (1951-1983). The figures include all plays, musicals and revues that noted a specific director or directors. Not included were operas, ice shows, puppet shows, dance or mime presentations. The accuracy of the Cox dissertation list and the Best Plays listings was not verified against alternate sources. Since some productions credit more than one director, the numbers of directors may exceed the number of productions in some years.

22

Burns Mantle, et al., eds., Best Plays (New York: Dodd, Mead and Co., 1928-1984), 65 vols. (1894-1983). In some cases there were more than one author and/or producer, therefore the percentages may equal more than one hundred percent for a time period. For further notation see introduction to appendix of this study, pp. 108-109.

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Henry MacMahon, "Women Directors Of Plays And Pictures," The Ladies Home Journal, December 1920, p. 12.

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Florence Von Wien, "Women Who Produce Plays," Independent Woman, 25 (1946), p. 58.

25

Nelson Lansdale, "Show Business Women," Theatre Arts, August 1952, p. 44.

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CHAPTER IV

The Development of the Woman Director

There are a number of factors that contributed to the increased opportunities for women in directing for commercial theatre in New York during the period 1920-1950. Among these factors are the influence of the female audience, the feminist involvement in establishing clubs and networking, the rise of the Little Theatre movement as a training ground for women, and the experiments in repertory theatre.

First of all, one of the early forms of control women had in theatre was as audience members. The increase of educated, economically self-sufficient women in the urban population coupled with relaxing moral restraints created a large female audience for theatre. By 1893 the New York Dramatic Mirror already carried a weekly column which titled this new phenomenon "The Matinee Girl." Producers eventually took note. When Charles Frohman conducted a survey of his audiences in 1911, he discovered that sixty-eight percent¹ were female. Since the customers were primarily women, the product had to be designed to meet their demands. Frohman responded by creating a star system based on major actresses and by encouraging women-oriented playwrights such as Clyde Fitch and James Barrie. Even vaudeville, which had begun as a male-oriented, saloon style entertainment, altered its

programming and began attracting large female audiences.

Feminists, such as Mary Shaw, encouraged women to use their power as audience members to effect further changes in the theatre:

There is an axiom in my profession that the most successful plays and players are the ones that please women. . . . It is a truth pregnant with meaning for women, and if you take this seed thought with you to your several homes and keep it in your minds during all your relation with the stage and its people, it will finally rouse, perhaps some new and strange convictions as to women's influence and responsibility towards the stage. 2

But as producers adapted their productions to current audiences' tastes, the critics responded negatively. The critics felt the managers were lowering their standards and³ producing insipid fare. Some women, however, felt that productions were not changing enough. These women did not want to be placated but respected, as indicated by actress-manager Mary Shaw:

Although 75% of the theatre-going public is composed of women and consequently the managers are lying awake nights trying to secure productions which will make a hit with them, they obstinately refuse to accept woman's judgement. No matter what an author says, the play is remodelled and whipped into shape by those men in charge, who cause the heroines to talk and act not as real women would but as men think that women ought to talk and act. 4

Some actress-managers such as Mary Shaw and Eva LeGallienne felt that real change would only come through⁵ female control of the industry. To achieve this goal, women

began by organizing their own clubs and theatres. The clubs would allow women professional contacts and the little theatre groups would provide on-the-job training. As important were the opportunities for women to exchange ideas and provide support for one another.

Clubs were formed by women for a variety of purposes-- education, reform and socializing. It happened that

. . . the growth of the theatre in America and its simultaneous use for educational and reform purposes coincided with the revival of the women's movements in the late 19th and early 20th century. 6

Many actresses were involved in reform groups or formed their own when the need arose. In these all-female enclaves they had the opportunity to learn managerial skills needed for directing and producing. Margaret Webster wrote of experiences she and her mother, Dame Mae Whitty, had as participants in English suffragist organizations:

Women playwrights emerged to write the necessary plays and pageants or to ghostwrite other people's speeches. Women organized performances, directed them, stage managed them, attended to the box office, made up accounts, handled publicity. For the first time, they became more than just actresses; they learned everything there was to know about how to run an organization or a stage. 7

In the theatre world, professional women's clubs became important. Men had already organized such groups as The Actors' Fund in 1882 and the Players' Club in 1888. Since women were shut out of these clubs and the types of contacts they provided, they organized their own groups. The

Twelfth Night Club was founded in 1891 by Alice Fisher primarily as a social club for actresses, but the club also staged benefits. In 1892 women "engaged in dramatic, musical⁸ and literary pursuits" founded the Professional Woman's League, headed by Mrs. A. M. Palmer. The value of the League was that its

. . . practical achievement such as its sewing, language, dancing, music, and law classes gave members a sense of what women could accomplish. The League put women, especially actresses, in touch with one another, resulting in mutual intellectual, social and psychological sustenance. 9

Although primarily a self-help group for actresses, the League also occasionally produced plays. For its tenth anniversary the League produced an all-woman exhibition at Madison Square Garden with the theme of the contributions of women throughout history in all nations. The entire exhibition was organized and run by women. Unfortunately, arguments over suffragism split the group in 1914. Mary Shaw, Lillian Russell and other strong pro-suffragists, formed the Gamut Club. Another group, Sorosis, was established by other women who had belonged to the League.

Women continued to organize support groups for themselves. The short-lived Woman's Theatre was founded in 1926 with the purpose

. . . to promote woman's work in the theatre and to render aid and give counsel to all who may apply. Whether she has a voice to

be heard--a play to be read--a desire to act--or to paint scenery--whenever a woman asks our advice or seeks out aid in securing an audition, we assist her without charge. 10

Even with the training the clubs afforded, the crucial contribution of these social clubs was the opportunity for contacts--networking. As consistently mentioned in early career guides, the key to theatre jobs was knowing someone to help one break into the business. The "old boy network" had long been in existence and now women were creating their own networks. Director and playwright Rachel Crothers credited networking for her success:

For a woman, it is best to look to women for help; women are more daring, they are glad to take the most extraordinary chances. . . . I think I should have been longer about my destiny if I had to battle with men alone. 11

Another type of club that may have influenced the development of women directors was the drama societies which were established for largely educational purposes. The Drama League was founded in 1910 in Evanston, Illinois by Mrs. A. Starrbest. Its purpose was

. . . to encourage production of better plays providing audiences to appreciate them now, and especially in the future, by educating the young folk by reading lists and study courses, among other things. 12

The Drama League also published bulletins to recommend worthy productions. Additionally, the Drama Society was founded in New York City in 1913. It supported quality theatre by buying up blocks of seats for members. Occasionally it produced its own plays. Another organization, the Stage

Society was also organized in New York City; it produced four plays a season. Groups such as these helped improve the image of female audiences. They provided an educational background for women interested in theatre, added social respectability to the theatre allowing parents to encourage daughters to enter the field, and promoted the ideal of production of quality drama often espoused by the early women actresses, directors and producers.

The third and most important factor that influenced the development of the woman director in America was the Little Theatre movement. Social reformers, as well as actors and playwrights, participated in the formation of these groups. Historian June Sochen noted that of the five major feminists in Greenwich Village in the 1910s, four were actively involved with the Little Theatre movement--Ida Rauh, Susan Glaspell, Neith Boyce Hapgood, and Henrietta Rodman.¹³ These and other women were important figures in the birth and growth of little theatres throughout America. In return they received invaluable training that allowed many to advance to work in commercial theatre and/or to form repertory companies.

The Little Theatre/Art Theatre movement began in the period 1911-1915. One of the early innovators, Mrs. Lyman Gale started the Toy Theatre in Boston in 1911 and ran it successfully for three seasons. The theatre failed after attempts to move to a larger building and to raise salaries.

At the same time, the Chicago Little Theatre was founded in 1912 by Maurice Browne and Ellen Van Volkenburg. Van Volkenburg was later to direct three productions on Broadway.

By far one of the most influential and well-known little theatre groups was the Provincetown Players. Inspired by performances of the Irish Players (headed by Lady Augusta Gregory), George Cram Cook and a group of fellow Provincetown intellectuals founded the Provincetown Players in 1915. Theirs was to be a playwrights' theatre. The by-laws stipulated that

. . . the President shall cooperate with the author, in producing the play under the author's direction. . . . The author shall produce the play without hindrance according to his own ideas. 14

This guideline meant many of the playwrights, including such women as Susan Glaspell, became instant directors. They had the opportunity to try directing in an open, creative atmosphere--an experience rare before this time for women. In fact, director Nina Moise provided Provincetown with its first professional direction in 1917. Moise was hired as general coach and, from then on, separate directors, other than the playwrights, were assigned to each production. At the same time, women were largely responsible for holding the Players together in the early years. Business management duties were shared by Susan Glaspell and Eleanor Fitzgerald; they were responsible for keeping the company financially solvent.

During World War I the Provincetown Players began to change due to its growing success; it became more commercial. Many of the original feminist and liberal activist founders dropped out, and Robert Edmond Jones, Kenneth Macgowan and Eugene O'Neill assumed control. In 1925 the group divided. James Light and Eleanor Fitzgerald moved back to Provincetown and renamed the company the Experimental Theatre, Inc. This theatre promoted new American works and survived until 1929. Meanwhile, Jones, Macgowan and O'Neill took control of the Greenwich Village theatre which was to merge later with the Actor's Theatre.

The other well-known Village group was the Washington Square Players founded in 1915. Ida Rauh was one of the co-founders. In seven years they produced ninety-three plays by forty-seven American playwrights. Nina Moise and Margaret Wycherly were among the directors for the group. Directing for Washington Square was a different experience because the company believed in group, rather than individual, decisions; this tradition was later adopted by the Theatre Guild.

There were other groups that struggled to be born and to survive. Among them was the Woman's National Theatre founded in 1913. Mary Shaw and Jessie Bonstelle hoped to use the group to alter trends in the American theatre. They had strong goals:

The theatre is an institution supported almost entirely by women and more than half interpreted by women. Yet it

entirely lacks the women note, as far as management and production are concerned. We are planning to put that note into American drama. 15

The project failed due to lack of funding.

In addition, some little theatre groups grew out of non-theatre organizations. Social reform organizations in places such as the Lower East Side of New York City contributed funds and space for a number of amateur theatre groups. One example was the Educational Alliance which ran the Educational Theatre. The program was managed by Alice Minnie Herts, and Mrs. Emma Sheridan was dramatic director. They provided classes and productions for children, as well as occasional adult plays.

A similar organization began with the support of philanthropists Alice and Irene Lewisohn. They started an amateur theatre group at the Henry Street Settlement. This program evolved into the Neighborhood Playhouse which operated a theatre on Grand Street (1915-1920) with primarily amateur performers. In 1920 they began recruiting a professional company and selling season subscriptions. The theatre was very successful until 1927 when it disbanded. Despite the success of their productions, the Neighborhood Playhouse's small theatre could not produce enough revenue to keep up with rising costs. Members later reorganized as the Grand Street Company which evolved into Actors-Managers, Inc.; both groups produced on Broadway.

One of the most important producing groups in the

American theatre, the Theatre Guild evolved from the Washington Square Players and was managed by a directorate, which included Theresa Helburn and Helen Westley. Their goal was to produce plays of artistic merit not normally produced in commercial theatres. Success came early and they began to transfer productions into Broadway houses. They eventually moved the entire company into a larger theatre and competed against the commercial producers. Since they had begun as a little theatre and had used women to direct as a matter of course, some women directors were able to "ride the Guild's coat tails" to commercial jobs. The Guild began to break apart in 1931. Theresa Helburn and Lawrence Langner held on until 1944. The Guild's success had a lasting impact by encouraging commercial producers to try the same types of drama.

This survey of major Little Theatre groups indicates that women played a major role in the foundation of the Little Theatre movement. The Little Theatre movement and its eventual expansion into commercial theatre provided training and job opportunities for many women. It is not clear whether the Little Theatre movement was the primary factor in the creation of the woman director or whether it was the woman, seeking training and power as a director and manager, who was the primary factor in the creation of the Little Theatre movement.

Women were also the primary factor in the establishment

of repertory theatre in New York City in the period 1926-1947. In 1926, twenty-seven-year-old Eva LeGallienne leased a derelict theatre on Fourteenth Street with the lofty goal of producing quality plays in repertory while maintaining low ticket prices. Although the male commercial producers scoffed, Eva LeGallienne's Civic Repertory Theatre survived for six years with critical acclaim. The Civic Repertory Theatre was a theatre created and maintained by women. LeGallienne was artistic director; Helen Lohman, theatre manager; Aline Bernstein, designer; Marion Evenson, actress; and Mary Louise Bok was the major patron. LeGallienne also hired female stage managers--a novelty in the 1920s.

Later, in the 1940s, Eva LeGallienne, in association with Cheryl Crawford and Margaret Webster, again tried to produce repertory theatre in New York City. The American Repertory Theatre lasted only one season, 1946-1947:

Many people felt that three women were bound to disagree, but this we never did--quite the contrary. Out of mutual respect and friendship we each made concessions in an effort to harmonize our different points of view, and this perhaps gave a synthetic quality to the whole venture. But the fact remains that the skill and industry that enabled us, in spite of difficulties usually termed "insurmountable," to present in New York, within a week, superior productions of three such contrasting works as those of Shakespeare, Barrie, and Ibsen might, it seems to me, have merited a little more understanding and recognition on the part of men who profess to love the theatre. 16

Both LeGallienne and Webster felt that the failure of

the American Repertory Theatre was due in large part to the lack of cooperation of the theatrical unions. In particular, the actions of the International Alliance of Theatrical Stage Employees (IATSE) are indicative of the condescension women faced in trying to produce quality theatre in repertory at affordable prices--a concept supported usually only by women. When LeGallienne was in a bargaining session with IATSE to obtain some form of concession on the standard Broadway contract, a union official pulled her aside and said, "If we want you have your little theatre, you'll have it, and if we don't want you to, you won't--see?"¹⁷ The musicians union also refused to grant concessions in contract terms. These extra contract costs heavily contributed to the American Repertory Theatre's failure.

Whereas the actresses and actress-managers at the turn of the century found themselves working in a world designed for women but controlled by men, the women in the 1920s to 1940s could write, direct and design the plays in the theatre in which they acted. In the late nineteenth century the female figure on stage was portrayed by a woman but her words, actions and environment were all products of men's vision of women. Outspoken individuals, such as Mary Shaw, campaigned for greater control but individual actions seemed ineffectual. In order to obtain more power within their own industry, women had to band together and create their own support groups and power structures. Observing the negotism

of the old-boy network, women organized professional clubs. To get women's own words and actions on the stage, they helped found the little theatre groups. To further their ideas of quality theatre, they established repertory theatres. Regardless of whether the woman was an amateur in Iowa running a community theatre or a professional actress working on Broadway, she necessarily turned to other women for support in her struggle to gain some control over the theatre in which she had worked as solely a performer for so many years.

NOTES ON CHAPTER IV

- 1 Albert Auster, Actresses And Suffragists: Women In The American Theater, 1890-1920 (New York: Praeger, 1984), p. 40.
- 2 Auster, p. 76.
- 3 Auster, p. 41.
- 4 Helen Krich Chinoy and Linda Walsh Jenkins, Women In American Theatre (New York: Crown Publishers, 1981), p. 106.
- 5 Chinoy, p. 59.
- 6 Auster, p. 5.
- 7 Margaret Webster, The Same Only Different (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1969), p. 249.
- 8 Auster, p. 71.
- 9 Auster, pp. 72-73.
- 10 Chinoy, p. 192.
- 11 Chinoy, p. 137.

12

Arthur E. Krows, Play Production In America (New York: Henry Holt and Co., 1916), p. 393.

13

June Sochen, The New Women: Feminism In Greenwich Village, 1910-1920 (New York: Quadrangle Books, 1972), p. 86.

14

Helen Krich Chinoy, "The Impact Of The Stage Director On American Plays, Playwrights, And Theatres, 1860-1930," Diss. Columbia University 1963, p. 173.

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Auster, p. 81.

16

Eva LeGallienne, With A Quiet Heart (1953; rpt, New York: Greenwood Press, 1974), p. 277.

17

LeGallienne, p. 260.

CHAPTER V

Selected Women Directors

There are comparatively no women producers. It has always been a theory of the theatre that a man must direct, and it is hard to break in. I got in through the Little Theatre movement, which is much broader in regard to women. I attend all possible performances of all kinds, and study production in this way. The only way to secure positions is to apply in person. It is very difficult unless you can show your work or come highly recommended from well-known people. The whole theatrical game is a gamble. 1

Thus wrote an anonymous women director in 1918 for Women Professional Workers, a career guide. Becoming a director was a struggle but it appears that by the date of this publication (1921) both directing and producing were recognized fields open to women.

The story of this struggle, the final attainment of success and the unfortunate curtailment of opportunities is best revealed through the lives and work of some of the women themselves. There were only nine American women who directed five or more productions on Broadway during the period 1915-1950: Jessie Bonstelle, Rachel Crothers, Lillian Trimble Bradley, Agnes Morgan, Eva LeGallienne, Antoinette Perry, Margaret Webster, Mary Hunter, and Margo Jones. Their Broadway careers span the entire first half of the twentieth

century. The similarities and differences of the routes they took to become directors give a fairly clear indication of the struggles faced and the success attained by many women during this time period.

The first significant woman director, Jessie Bonstelle (1872-1932), was born on her father's farm near Greece, New York; she was the youngest of eight children. Her father had been a lawyer but was forced into farming during the economic depression in the late 1860s. Her mother, who had been stage-struck as a child, focused all her attention on her youngest child. Jessie Bonstelle made her performance debut at the age of two as a singer and began touring as a reciter by the age of seven. By age twelve Bonstelle was touring in stock companies and did so for another ten years until her marriage to an actor, Alexander Hamilton Stuart, in 1893. She continued to act in stock with her husband, who died in 1911. She was considered good by stock company standards but she did not attain critical acclaim or stardom.

Her opportunity to direct came in 1900 when the Shubert brothers, who were just beginning to build their theatre empire, asked her to direct a stock company in their Rochester, New York playhouse. Why they chose Bonstelle is not clear, but the Shuberts were known for taking chances. For the next few years Bonstelle managed, directed and acted with the company. Her success as a manager-director brought an invitation to start another stock company in Buffalo in

1906 and then an additional company in Detroit in 1910. She commuted between both cities, managing and directing (as well as occasionally acting) for both companies during the summer seasons.

In the meantime Bonstelle continued her varied career. She continued her association with the Shuberts and in 1912 began directing Broadway productions under the Shuberts' and William Brady's management. From 1912-1917 Bonstelle directed the Municipal Theatre in Northampton, Massachusetts in association with Bertram Harrison. They also co-directed two plays in New York.

After commuting between stock companies and New York commercial theatre, Jessie Bonstelle decided that she wanted to establish a community-supported professional theatre away from New York. Backed by some Detroit businessmen, Bonstelle opened The Bonstelle Playhouse, later known as the Detroit Civic Theatre, on January 1, 1925. She added schools of drama and dance for children and adults. She continued to produce stock-type productions but later began adding the classics from Shakespeare to Ibsen. The theatre, unfortunately, only survived a year after her death in 1932.

Jessie Bonstelle continued to direct occasional plays in New York until 1929 including Little Women, A King From Nowhere, Home Again, Triumph of X, and The Enchanted Cottage. Her producers were William Brady, the Shuberts and occasionally herself. Critical response to her work was

generally favorable. Her broad background and knowledge of theatre helped her with many of her productions including her first success, Little Women, in 1912, as noted in the New York Times:

It shows . . . a very considerable degree of skill in re-creating the old atmosphere on the part of those who bring it to the footlights. For this result Miss Jessie Bonstelle is largely responsible. . . . The make-up, costumes and general color throughout are exactly right and the production on the whole visualizes the book, the characters, and the period, as well as these things can ever be done on the stage. 3

In contrast with this praise, her work with actors was not always as strong as critics would have liked. There were occasional references to "stock company acting, too⁴ overblown" or "acting sufficient to the occasion"⁵ which might indicate a directing style not comparable to other Broadway directors.

In conclusion, Jessie Bonstelle must be considered a pioneer, for her work occurred primarily in the transitional period in directing. Although she began when Broadway was still dominated by the autocrats and technical wizards such as Belasco, she was obviously physically capable and maintained an enormous work load for fifty-eight years. Further, her business acumen was well respected by such men as the Shuberts. Perhaps Jessie Bonstelle is best known for establishing one of the first profitable regional civic theatres in the United States and for the talent she discovered: William Powell, Winifred Lenihan, Ann Harding,

Frank Morgan, James Rennie, and Katharine Cornell. In addition, Josephine Hull and Guthrie McClintic directed for her and Jo Mielziner worked as her production assistant.

Rachel Crothers (1878-1958) was another woman director who began work during the transitional period prior to 1915. Unlike Bonstelle, she continued working in the New York theatre until her retirement. Many scholars ignore Crothers' work as a director because she is better known as a playwright. She did direct all her own plays, but she also directed three plays on Broadway that were not of her authorship.

Rachel Crothers was born in Bloomington, Illinois to a physician father and a soon-to-be physician mother. Young Rachel was often left with relatives while her mother continued her medical studies. She developed an interest in theatre in her teens, tried playwriting and joined a local amateur theatre group. After attending Normal University of Illinois, Crothers moved to New York and began studying acting at the Stanhope-Wheatcroft School. After graduation Crothers was hired as an acting coach and was encouraged to direct the students in her own short plays:

. . . an experience of inestimable value
because the doors of the theatre are
very tightly closed to women in the
work of directing and staging plays. 6

After spending a few years acting with small companies in New York, Crothers landed her first professional directing position in 1908 when Maxine Elliott asked her to direct

Myself Betting. Crothers later worked for a number of Broadway producers from 1908-1940 but two names constantly appear, the Shuberts and, later, John Golden. Both consistently hired women directors.

Besides her theatre work, Crothers was also an organizer. In 1915 she headed the Women's War Relief and, later, in 1939 she organized the American Theatre Wing of British War Relief. In 1942 the Wing opened the all-volunteer Stage Door Canteen in Times Square which served four to five thousand servicemen a night. Crothers considered her war relief work as important a contribution as her plays. Lois Gottlieb summed up Crothers' philosophy in her study of the playwright:

. . . her theatrical philosophy in the face of public disaster was very much what it had been during World War I; to depend on the theatre for diversion from care. Crothers called the theatre "the quickest escape from ourselves into the world of imagination" and believed that "escape is more and more imperative as civilization makes life more hideous for us." 7

Rachel Crothers' success on Broadway varied as it did for many directors. She had eleven confirmed "hits" (11@1, more than 100 performances each) which speaks well for both the plays and her directing. Her productions consistently received good reviews for the acting even in the face of a weak script. The following quotations of New York Times reviews are indicative of the critics' opinions:

. . . perfect conjunction of playwriting, acting and stage management. . . . When all due credit is allowed to her collaborators, the triumph rests with Miss Crothers.

Exceeding Small (1924) 8

Miss Crothers is quite as able a director as she is a playwright. She has cast her drama imaginatively and directed it brilliantly, giving every actor the chance to do his best work.

As Husbands Go (1931) 9

For Miss Crothers has not only a mind of her own but a sound touch in the theatre. When she stages one of her own comedies and translates players into actors you are in good hands.

When Ladies Meet (1932) 10

Her productions of The Book of Charn (1925), Exceeding Small (1928) and The Old Foolishness (1940), all by other playwrights, were not as successful.

According to writer Lois Gottlieb, Crothers early plays were labelled feminist but later plays seemed to be toned down and became more commercially acceptable. It is possible she made a choice between success and idealism, but she did not sacrifice quality. One of her last plays, Susan and God, won the Pulitzer Prize in 1937. She later retired to live quietly in Connecticut.

Gottlieb recalled Crothers' appraisal of the argument of male vs. female directors:

The fact that Crothers was a woman director in a field dominated by men did not go unnoticed, but Crothers discarded the notion that women "intuitively" would make better directors than men. Indeed, she saw the "average feminine love of detail" as a disadvantage and believed that men,

to date, were more successful directors because they had a "broader eye for general effects." Finally, however, she maintained that "work has no sex . . . it is a question of who can produce the most charming illusion." 11

Significantly, Rachel Crothers attributed her success to the help of other women:

When I look back on it, I realize it is to three women that I owe my freedom . . . Charlotta Nielson, who liked my play; Mrs. Wheatcroft, who asked me to be coach; and Maxine Elliott, who let me in on the professional work. For a woman it is best to look to women for help. . . . 12

The American consciousness appeared to have taken little note of the early professional women directors such as Bonstelle and Crothers. Not until after World War I did the press herald the arrival of Lillian Trimble Bradley as the first American woman director.¹³ Little verifiable material is available concerning the early life of Lillian Trimble Bradley (1875-1959). She was born in Milton, Kentucky but educated in a convent school in Paris. Her American status allowed her extra privileges such as attending the theatre regularly. Deciding to become a playwright, Bradley set about to design her own education. She applied as an apprentice to Andre Antoine in Paris and assisted with two of his productions. From here she went to Moscow for two years to study at the Moscow Art Theatre. She directed four student productions for Stanislavsky's group and learned as much about technical theatre as she could. By this time she had two plays written and decided to return to the United

States; however, her goals had now changed--she wanted to be a director.

The exact details of Bradley's career development are not certain for newspaper accounts differ on this interim period of her life. At some point she married a wealthy stock broker and later was divorced or widowed. With her marriage she acquired a large house in which she built a laboratory for lighting and set design experimentation. However, she continued to pursue her career objective:

In the interim between her return to this country and the beginning of her association with Mr. Broadhurst, she made countless efforts to establish herself as a director, but found doors locked to her. Managers refused to believe that a woman was capable of mastering the infinite technical detail which goes with the production of even the simplest play. 14

The above was taken from a newspaper interview discussing her great success with The Crimson Alibi in 1919.

Bradley's association with producer George Broadhurst began in 1918 and was of paramount importance to her career. When he expressed an interest in producing her play, The Woman on the Index, Bradley courageously made a trade-off: he could produce the play if she could assist with the direction. He agreed, and he eventually appointed her as general stage director of the Broadhurst Theatre in 1919. The production of The Crimson Alibi established her as a director:

With the production here of "The Crimson Alibi" ten days ago the name of Mrs. Lillian Trimble Bradley was entered upon the scroll whereon are written those stage directors who must be reckoned with. The production of plays and its infinite detail--the design and building of the scenery, the working out of the lighting, etc.--have been regarded as man's work, and Mrs. Bradley is probably the first woman in the country to go into it as a profession. There are, of course, several women playwrights, such as Rachel Crothers, who direct their own plays, but they are playwrights primarily, and directors secondarily. Mrs. Bradley, although she has written plays, did so only as a means to an end--and that end was directing. 15

Her work in directing and design, which she often did in addition, earned her the epithet "the five-foot pocket
16
edition of a woman Belasco." Indeed a New York Times review of The Crimson Alibi describes what appears to be very much like a Belasco production:

The director had not only to create, maintain and heighten the tensity [sic] of dramatic suspense from scene to scene and from act to act, but also handle scenes of violence and gun play man fashion. There were large technical difficulties too; many elaborate sets, much rapid shifting required, hard lighting problems, and finally the manuscript called for a battle in an interior in almost total darkness, with fighting going on on three different levels and revealed chiefly by pistol flashes. . . . In addition to deft management of the action, the lighting and the scenic construction called for special remark. Mrs. Bradley here put into effect her theory of profoundly influencing audience moods by color combinations, and she built reversible scenery and scenery that telescoped. . . . 17

Bradley obviously had mastered many techniques of effective staging.

Lillian Trimble Bradley continued to direct under Broadhurst's management until 1924. Bradley directed a total of eight Broadway productions including The Wonderful Thing (1920), Come Seven (1920), Tarzan Of The Apes (1921), and Izzy (1924). She married Broadhurst in 1925 and appears to have retired. They eventually moved to Santa Barbara where he died in 1952 and she in 1959.

Compared to Bonstelle, Crothers and Bradley, another director working around this time took the more usual route for women, through the Little Theatre movement. Agnes Morgan (c.1880- ?) was born in LeRoy, New York. Her father was an editor and her mother, a teacher. Morgan received a A.B. (1901) and a A. M. (1903) degree from Radcliffe. While at Radcliffe, Morgan attended a seminar in playwriting conducted by George Pierce Baker. He was impressed with her talent and encouraged her to study in Europe for a year. After returning to the United States, Morgan briefly attended Baker's 47 Workshop at Harvard.

Agnes Morgan began her career by writing but, eventually, became an executive staff member and director at the Neighborhood Playhouse where she worked from 1915-1927. As Neighborhood Playhouse productions moved uptown to commercial houses, she moved with them. When the Playhouse disbanded in 1927, Agnes Morgan reorganized the

group into Actors-Managers, Inc. as a producing company. She was president and director from 1927-1939.

During the Depression Morgan worked for a number of organizations. She directed for Hallie Flanagan's Federal Theatre Project in New York and later directed for the Theatre Guild and the Shuberts. During the 1930s Morgan also began periodically directing for stock companies and in 1940 became co-producer and director of the Paper Mill Playhouse in Milburn, New Jersey. After 1942 Morgan ceased to direct on Broadway but remained with the Paper Mill.

Although Agnes Morgan directed twenty-one productions on Broadway and many more "off", her reviews are not outstanding. In her early association with the Neighborhood Playhouse, she directed classics such as The Little Clay Cart and Sheridan's The Critic as well as new American and imported European plays. The Little Clay Cart, produced in 1924, received a thoughtful review from Stark Young:

They allow the play its strangeness, its age, its convention, but always in a wise proportion to the real substance in it. . . . They play it happily, but they give every chance to the poetry and ideas behind it. 18

From 1926-1929 Morgan wrote and directed an annual revue called Grand Street Follies--always amusing but usually amateurish in performance according to Brooks Atkinson:

Part of it was lifeless last evening, parts of it were better conceived than executed. On the other hand, most of it was shrewdly plotted and immensely entertaining. 19

Agnes Morgan received better reviews in the 1930s when she returned to directing straight plays such as American Holiday (1936), Class of '29 (1936) and A Hero Is Born (1938). New York Times' reviews of her last two productions, Papa Is All and I Killed the Count, in 1942 indicated a well-paced directing style:

. . . "Papa is All" has been well staged. . . . The performance is conspicuously well-oiled and slips along with considerable humor. 20

Never having more than a couple of minutes on stage at a time, the other actors have to perform in a series of explosions. Their individual scenes go off like firecrackers. 21

Even more prolific than Morgan, the most produced woman director on Broadway is Eva Le Gallienne. She has directed more productions on Broadway (42+) than any other woman and more than most men. Many scholars delete her from directing studies because she was an actress, as Crothers is deleted because of her playwriting. Le Gallienne would probably agree that acting was her primary profession but she approached directing as seriously, received critical acclaim for her work, and did direct plays in which she did not appear.

Eva LeGallienne (1899-) was born in London and raised in both England and France by her mother, a Danish journalist. Her father was a renowned poet but difficult to live with, and so her parents separated shortly after her birth. Her early lifestyle allowed LeGallienne independence and constant contact with adults in the arts.

After her acting debut in London, LeGallienne moved to the United States at the age of sixteen. As an actress in New York, she began to recruit fellow cast members into presenting non-commercial plays at special matinees. These proved so successful that she decided to produce on her own. With some donated financial backing, LeGallienne leased a run-down theatre on Fourteenth Street and on October 25, 1926 opened the Civic Repertory Theatre dedicated to producing quality drama at popular prices. Her first season included Shakespeare, Ibsen and Chekhov and was very successful. Her audience slowly built but so did the expenses. Donors made up the deficits until the Depression, but then they could no longer help. LeGallienne refused to raise ticket prices--an act of heroism or lack of business sense--but she did struggle through until 1932. LeGallienne also ran a free school in association with the repertory company.

LeGallienne continued to produce independently and in conjunction with other producers such as Carly Wharton and the Theatre Guild. Her dream of a repertory theatre company in New York, though, would not die. LeGallienne, in association with Margaret Webster and Cheryl Crawford, founded the American Repertory Theatre in 1946. Again Shakespeare, Ibsen and Chekhov were produced successfully but this time economics, mainly in the form of unions, turned against them immediately. The American Repertory Theatre died after one year. LeGallienne has continued to act and

to direct periodically since that time. Her latest Broadway production was a revival of Alice In Wonderland in 1982.

When Eva LeGallienne began directing, she hoped to correct weaknesses she had observed in other directors. She complained about directors who treated all actors alike. LeGallienne knew that some actors worked slowly from the inside out--these performers needed to be left alone the first few weeks and then helped only by suggestions. Other actors worked from externals to create a mood within and these people needed elaborate detailed direction from the beginning. LeGallienne explained her approach:

To set down an arbitrary scheme on paper, from which no deviation is permitted, is obviously a stultifying method, precluding any creative contribution on the part of the actors, and closing the door to sudden flashes of inspiration on the part of all concerned; but, to guard against confusion and the waste of much precious time, the director should have a clear pattern in mind. This may be modified and changed to suit the exigencies of the moment or the temperament of some specific player, but it should provide a basic over-all line from which the finished performance can evolve. . . . I think it must be difficult, perhaps almost impossible, for a director who has never been an actor himself to understand the precise balance of freedom and authority required in handling players.... A great director, therefore, must be not only an artist and a craftsman, but very importantly, a psychologist as well. 22

Reviews of LeGallienne's productions often center on her own performances, which were consistently excellent. From a critical point of view, the repertory work (which formed the greatest part of her directing work) had benefits as well as

problems. For example, the same acting company working together for a long period develops strong ensemble ability, but the work load of repertory requires some plays to open before they are quite ready. Opening night reviews, consequently, were not always favorable. LeGallienne's best work was with the plays of Ibsen and Chekhov, several of which she translated herself. Two of her greatest critical successes were The Sea Gull in 1929 with the Civic Repertory Theatre and John Gabriel Borkman in 1946 for the American Repertory Theatre. The New York Times praised each:

[The Sea Gull] is an exquisite story in monotone. . . . and the beauty of the theatrical crafts and all the sincerity of histrionic feeling are evoking before your eyes a strange, sombre, infinitely sympathetic sweep of truth. . . . a matchless achievement. 23

Under Miss LeGallienne's direction, the American Repertory actors are giving [John Gabriel Borkman] a vibrant performance with the rhythm of a dance of death and the tone of a song of doom. With the parts beautifully modulated and the pace swift and biting, the performance is a work of black magic. 24

Although Eva LeGallienne may not have been the best director of her time, she was among the most productive in the period 1925-1946. Critic John Mason Brown expressed his views of her work's impact:

There are better actresses in New York than Miss LeGallienne, and there are more capable directors, too. But she is not an actress or a director. She is a force...a dynamo with ideas as well as a will of her own, and as such she is a figure who knows no equal in our contemporary theatre. 25

One of the most commercially successful directors of the 1920-1950 period was Antoinette Perry (1888-1946), who is probably more remembered for the award established in her name (the Tony) than for her work as a director. Born in Denver as the only child of an attorney, Antoinette Perry began her career as an actress. Her interest in theatre began when her aunt and uncle, who were both actors, took her on tour during school holidays. Perry acted in New York from 1906-1908 for David Belasco. In 1908 she married a Denver businessman and retired. They had three daughters, two of whom, Elaine and Margaret, also became actresses and directors.

When her husband died in 1922, Perry immediately returned to the stage. She acted for a few years and in the process met producer Brock Pemberton. With his encouragement and assistance, Perry began her directing career in 1928. In eighteen years, working mostly with Pemberton, Perry directed thirty plays, four of which would enter the history books by running for over 500 performances each: Strictly Dishonorable (1929), Personal Appearance (1934), Janie (1942), and Harvey (1944).

Brooks Atkinson's reviews of her productions consistently comment on the brisk tempo of direction and may explain why she specialized in comedies:

Under Miss Perry's direction it pushes ahead
with the heedless rush of a spring freshet.
Now You've Done It (1937) 26

Under Antoinette Perry's bustling direction the performance is broad and the tempo is rapid.

Lady in Waiting (1940) 27

Antoinette Perry's direction is frantic, too. The actors can hardly get on and off the stage swiftly enough and they hardly have time enough to speak their lines.

Glamour Preferred (1940) 28

As a director Perry said she thought "in terms of architecture--which is movement--of ballet, of music, of emphasis." 29

In addition to directing, Antoinette Perry was chair of the Apprentice Theatre (1937-1939), president of the Experimental Theatre (1941), and trustee of the Actors Fund of America--once an all-male enclave. During World War II she worked with Rachel Crothers to establish the American Theatre Wing and the Stage Door Canteen. Antoinette Perry died of a heart attack in 1946, and in 1947 the American Theatre Wing established in her memory the Antoinette Perry Awards for significant contributions to the theatre.

Aside from Eva LeGallienne, the most recognized woman director of the period was Margaret Webster, a fifth generation member of a venerable English acting family. Webster had planned a career in acting but circumstances led her into directing, and here she gained an international reputation. Considered British by many, Webster was actually born in New York City and maintained dual citizenship throughout her life. As did LeGallienne, Webster grew up

in an international circle of people in the arts. She studied acting at a London drama school but learned fundraising and management at her mother's side in suffragist organizations in England. She acted with a variety of companies in England and finally began directing in the mid 1930s.

Her American directing career began when a friend, Maurice Evans, asked her to direct him in Richard II which was set to open in New York in September of 1937. She agreed and was to see England rarely, nor have much opportunity to act again. Her success was instant:

For her unfettered and uncluttered direction proves on second sight to be one of the rarer virtues of this excitement out of the history books. Mr. Evans and Miss Webster can still charge a minor Shakespeare drama with the high fervor of an infernally interesting theatre experience. 30

Richard II ran for 133 performances.

Margaret Webster continued to specialize in Shakespeare but also directed Chekhov, Shaw, Ibsen and a few modern playwrights. Webster worked for a period with the Theatre Guild but found their committee approach frustrating:

...I was unreasonably exasperated by Lawrence [Langner]. I think this was because he was one of the very few people in my theatre life who made me conscious that I was a woman doing what is more often a man's job. He would insist on patting me on the head (metaphorically) and saying "There, there!" A "wise old owl" who knew us both counseled me take advantage of this "little woman" status by flinging

myself on his manly chest and pleading for help; but I was stiff-necked and couldn't play it that way. 31

After the aborted attempt of the American Repertory Theatre, Webster continued to direct in New York for the New York City Theatre Company and for independent producers. In 1950 she became the first woman to direct an opera at the Metropolitan Opera.

Her career was soaring until a group of ex-F.B.I. agents published a small book entitled Red Channels. Webster's name appeared on a long list of other artists suspected as Communists. The impact of the list was profound:

Professionally I have no doubt that my so-called "career" was undermined, if it was not ostensibly broken. Personally, it had subtle side-effects. . . . All in all, my life did, very profoundly, change after those years, and in part as a result of them. There were other factors. The American theatre was changing too, very rapidly. . . . Broadway became almost uninhabitable for citizens of my sort of theatre. . . . Most of the stars transferred allegiance to the movies or the new young giant, television. The blacklist stopped that for me. It might not have, probably would not, if I had fought back into those fields; but I didn't really want to. They weren't "my thing." 32

Margaret Webster did continue to direct in New York after this period but not as often; she shifted her emphasis to the college circuit. She travelled with two one-woman shows, one on Shakespeare and the other on Shaw, in addition to giving lectures and directing. She continued to teach and direct until her death in 1972.

Margaret Webster wrote extensively of her directing style in her autobiography, Don't Put Your Daughter On The Stage:

First and foremost, I never set out to impose myself on a play, but always to reveal it. Inevitably there are particular emphases and angles of approach. . . . I used to try for the simple virtues; for instance to make the plays march, to make them exciting. I found that you must believe in the plot to make others believe it, trust the story and project it boldly. . . . Sometimes I sacrificed introvert detail and the lingering caress in the cause of impetus, energy and tempo. Tempo is not the equivalent of haste. It is rhythm and variety, exactly as in a musical score. You must husband time so as to have it to spare when you need it, so that a silence can strike like a thunderclap, or hold the stage immobile for a full minute, if that is what you want. . . . Shakespeare's little people are immensely important to his big ones. Even the bystanders, the "crowd," must be individually realized. . . . Sometimes I was criticized for domesticating the plays and cluttering them with visual "business." . . . but I am sure that a character can be revealed and situations clarified by visual action. . . . 33

The importance Webster placed on tempo was clearly reflected in Brooks Atkinson's comments on the brisk pacing of her productions:

With Miss Webster's swiftly paced direction. . . .

Hamlet (1939) 34

But thanks largely to Margaret Webster's bustling and forthright direction. . . .

Richard II (1940) 35

Miss Webster admires the play as well as she understands it. The performance is lucid, animated and sensitive to Shaw's meaning.

Saint Joan (1951) 36

To maintain this brisk tempo Webster had her stage managers keep a "cough chart." An increased number of coughs and shuffling from the audience meant the pace had slowed; therefore, the actors were advised to pick the pace up again.

In her college lectures, Margaret Webster gave advice to students who wanted to enter the directing field:

Well, you become a director by learning to do everything. You should have some acting experience. You needn't be a great actor, but you must know what an actor has to do. You must know how to tackle all problems, from high finance and diplomacy to the proverbial "sweeping the stage." You must be prepared to do anything and everything in the theatre. Stage managing, prompting, everything. 37

Fortunately, by the 1950s and 1960s, women as well as men could take her advice and work at everything in the theatre, not just at acting.

As early as the 1930s women were able to pursue careers in directing without first having to work as professional actors. Mary Hunter (1904-) was one example of this new generation of women who were able to pursue directly a career in directing. Born in Bakersfield, California and later relocated to Hollywood, Hunter began her apprenticeship as a motion picture script girl for William DeMille. After attending Wellesley, she moved to New Mexico where she directed folk pageants while working as a rural school principal. In the late 1920s Hunter moved to Chicago to complete a B.A. degree in art and anthropology at the University of Chicago. While in Chicago she co-founded

the Cube Theatre and worked in radio. In the 1930s, Mary Hunter founded the American Actors Company in association with other students of Maria Ouspenskaya and Tamara Daykarhanova in New York City. Hunter directed for the company for five years.

In 1944 she made her Broadway directing debut with a production of Only the Heart. Four other Broadway productions were to follow including The Respectful Prostitute (1948) and The Happy Journey to Trenton and Camden (1948). New York Times' reviews of these two productions were indicative of the favorable response her work received:

(The Respectful Prostitute is) a tautly-written melodrama played sharply and brilliantly by a keenly directed cast. . . . Under Mary Hunter's incisive direction, it is played with the cutting stroke of a knife. 38

Under Mary Hunter's appreciative direction, the New Stagers give The Happy Journey to Trenton and Camden a perfect performance without self-consciousness or patronizing. 39

Changes in the late 1940s were to affect the remainder of Mary Hunter's career. As the veterans began arriving home from World War II, they were offered priority admission to schools as well as the funds to pay expenses. To take advantage of this situation, Mary Hunter organized the American Theatre Wing School and taught classes in acting and directing.

With the postwar inflation, costs on Broadway

continued to soar. Because of these costs, producers became more cautious and Hunter's just burgeoning career fell victim to this trend. Hunter was hired by Joseph Kipness and Monte Proser to direct High Button Shoes. She had been working with scenic designer, Jo Mielziner, for a few weeks and was ready to begin rehearsals when she was abruptly fired and replaced with George Abbott. During arbitration hearings, the producers claimed that they fired her because she was incompetent, but witnesses disagreed. Jo Mielziner testified that in his opinion Mary Hunter was one of the three or four people in the profession who truly understood all the elements that went into a musical production. ⁴⁰ Mary Hunter won her suit but not a return to the job. The producers had opted for a "name" director to guarantee their financial investment.

In 1950 Mary Hunter left Broadway but not directing. For two years she worked in Dallas and then returned to New York to work in television. In the mid-1950s Hunter was named Executive Director of the American Shakespeare Festival in Stratford, Connecticut. She later became the director of Stratford's educational projects program. Mary Hunter has since retired from this position but continues to serve on a number of advisory councils for the arts and education.

Another director in the later part of the 1920-1950 period was Margo Jones (1913-1955), whose name became synonymous with the birth of American regional theatre.

Jones did have, however, a short career on Broadway as a producer and director from 1945-1950. After earning a M.A. in psychology from Texas State College for Women, Margo Jones received her theatre training at Southwestern School of the Theatre in Dallas and at the Pasadena Playhouse. Jones began work as an assistant director in the short-lived Houston Federal Theatre Project and then directed the children's theatre program for the Houston Recreation Department. In 1936 Jones founded the Houston Community Players. During World War II she taught at the University of Texas and directed at the Cleveland Playhouse and the Pasadena Playhouse. It was during the war period that Margo Jones met Tennessee Williams whose play, The Glass Menagerie, she brought to Broadway in 1945.

While directing other Broadway productions, Jones established a theatre in Dallas dedicated to encouraging new playwrights and to experimental productions of older plays. Theatre '47, later '48, '49, etc., was considered the progenitor of today's regional theatres. As outlined in her 1951 book, Theatre-In-The-Round, Jones hoped for a national theatre, a network of twenty resident theatres throughout the country modelled on Theatre '50 and with a central office under her leadership. Unfortunately, her untimely death in 1955 ended her dream, but her book became an inspiration and guideline for others who started regional companies.

The women who became successful directors in the first

half of the twentieth century had to have "stamina, strength of an elephant, the courage of a lion and the hide of a rhinoceros" according to Margaret Webster.⁴¹ These nine women were all well-educated, whether formally or not, and usually had some early contact with the theatre. They all came from middle or upper class families. Although some of them married, interestingly they were all unmarried during the time period in which they directed on Broadway. Entrance to the directing profession usually came through acting, or occasionally through writing, but never through stage managing. Not until the time of Mary Hunter and Margo Jones were women able to enter the profession directly. Many of the early women directors (Rachel Crothers, Agnes Morgan, Eva LeGallienne and Margaret Webster) relied on and worked with other women while others (Jessie Bonstelle, Lillian Trimble Bradley and Antoinette Perry) found admission with the assistance of already established men. Again, the new generation, Jones and Hunter, could be more independent.

The driving force which many women shared was an ideal theatre which had been first tried by Drew and Fiske--quality drama at popular prices. Some of the early women directors, such as Bonstelle, found they had to leave Broadway to accomplish this goal. Other women, such as Crothers, modified their ideals in order to continue working in commercial theatre.

For a while in the 1920s and 1930s, though, for those

promoting quality theatre there was hope:

What is right with the theatre today
is also what is wrong with the theatre
today: it is in the process of becoming
an art and ceasing to be a business. 42

and success:

The twenties proved that theatre could be
art, if it was not controlled by show
business. In the twenties. O'Neill made
more money than Cohan. 43

and there was prosperity. Such women as Agnes Morgan were
able to make the transition from little theatre to Broadway.
LeGallienne and Webster achieved success by creating their
own Broadway repertory theatres. And Bradley and Perry
successfully competed with men by directing the same types of
plays and in the same style utilized by men.

With the end of World War II, though, the situation
began to change. Critic Brooks Atkinson noted that "by 1950,
Broadway was no longer much interested in art."⁴⁴ Broadway no
longer seemed a place for these women who struggled to
maintain their ideals. Business once again overshadowed art.
Eva LeGallienne mourned the passing of a responsive theatre
world in which repertory theatre was once possible:

The increasing demands on the part of
the now triumphant unions threaten to
create abuses just as dangerous and
formidable as those they so rightly
abolished. . . . Our best talents in the
fields of acting, playwriting, and direction
are limited by inexcusable conditions to
playing safe, and such a limitation is
not conducive to the full development of
any art. Our theatre has become a
formidable game of chance, concerned
exclusively with high stakes and huge

profits. There is no longer any joy in it, or any place for those who think of it in other terms than these. . . . as long as our code is "Give me, give me!" we may have the greatest "show biz" in the world, but our theatre will be limited to occasional foreign importations, memories of the past, and dreams of a better future. 45

What was even more detrimental was a changing attitude after 1950, not just towards art, but against women. The number women of directors on Broadway plummeted; for three years, 1955-1957, there were none at all. Webster felt her career damaged by McCarthyism, Hunter by her discrimination suit; some like Jones left voluntarily to follow their ideals outside the New York commercial market. It was in 1947--towards the end of the peak period for women directors on Broadway--that Norris Houghton wrote an article entitled "It's A Woman's World." His criticism heralded the cry for a return of masculine theatre:

. . . if our stages have become more and more a woman's world, it is because we have withdrawn too much from the world of men; because we have been content to reflect the trivialities of domesticity and to enjoy the safe sentimentality of our relations with mom or the girl friend rather than face up to the sinewy and exacting life of our time. 47

In the 1950s the New York theatre world was again dominated by men.

The actresses of the early twentieth century looked at the theatre as a world in which they worked but in which they had little power to influence. The positions of control, director and producer, were held almost exclusively by men.

The rise of feminism in the 1910s and the economic prosperity of the 1920s played a major role in creating more career opportunities for women. Perhaps more crucial factors, though, were the change in the director's role in the theatre and the influence of the Little Theatre movement on the types of drama produced in America. In the period 1920-1950 women finally found both the opportunities for input and a receptivity to their ideas of American drama. Helen Krich Chinoy best summarized the change that occurred after 1950:

The women who have made major contributions to American theatre have tended to identify themselves--whether they were actresses, playwrights, directors, or producers--with an idea of theatre larger than that of Broadway. . . . Most of these women turned their backs on making it on Broadway. They rejected what sociologists consider the male preoccupation with power and climbing the ladder in the "cash nexus world." Their concerns with the values of what has been called the "status world" in which love, duty, tenderness, individuality, and expressiveness are central. . . . They reject the "atmosphere of hysteria, crisis, fragmentation, one shotness, and mammon-mindedness" of the Broadway system as inappropriate for the "collective and cumulative" art of the theatre. 48

Because of this change in attitudes in theatre, women directors, voluntarily or otherwise, left the Broadway theatre. Many continued to direct in regional or educational theatres, others modified their careers, and some gave up the struggle forever.

NOTES ON CHAPTER V

1

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2

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CHAPTER VI

Conclusion

This study has tried to trace some of the basic factors that may have influenced the development of the woman director in America. Factors can be found in general societal attitudes as well as in the economic structure and artistic nature of the theatre. At the beginning of the twentieth century women worked successfully and equally with men in the acting profession. But, for the most part, women acted in plays that were written by men (ninety-two percent), directed by men (ninety-seven percent), and produced by men (thirty to sixty-one percent).¹ The selection and shaping of American drama was, therefore, dominated by men. Women found themselves hindered in training for and in employment in the directing field.

In the 1910s and 1920s, the changing role of the director coincided with the rise of feminism and the lessening of social barriers against career women. The rise of professionalism in the theatre helped attract better educated and more highly motivated women to the stage. Spurred by the desire to influence the quality of staged drama, women organized clubs and little theatres which provided them with professional contacts and with training. A number of these little theatre groups later expanded or

reorganized into commercial producing organizations. Therefore, when Broadway reached its peak in the mid-1920s, skilled women directors were able to find more employment opportunities or, in some cases, produced their own.

The success of the women directors during 1920-1950 did not mean that the struggle for acceptance was over. Even in the peak years, the late 1940s, women still represented only thirteen percent of the Broadway directors.² Further, these women were aided by the production of a large percentage of plays by some of the theatre companies they had helped to create. As discussed in Chapter V of this study, such people as Eva LeGallienne, Brooks Atkinson, and Helen Krich Chinoy noted a distinct change in the quality of drama produced on Broadway after 1950. It is not possible to conclude whether this change is responsible for the number of women who no longer directed on Broadway, or whether the absence of women directors was responsible for the change in the quality of drama. Women have long had a reputation for championing quality theatre at affordable prices. The argument of art-versus-business, and who is on which side is a complex matter. Regardless of this question, the facts show that after 1950 the percentage of women directors on Broadway significantly declined.

As stated in the introduction, this study of the woman director on Broadway is a preliminary investigation. The history of the development of the woman director in America

cannot be fully explored without dealing with the question of sexual discrimination. However, "discrimination" and "prejudice," whether based on tradition or on personal bias, cannot be easily documented. Statistics can indicate the possibility of its existence and individuals can express suppositions on its impact, but discrimination is often an elusive factor to delineate.

To prove a case of discrimination against women directors in the American theatre will require a more detailed study. A number of statistical studies have been done in recent years concerning the hiring of women directors in all levels of theatre from amateur community groups to Broadway. A 1979 survey by the American Council for the Arts showed that 79.2 percent of managing or executive positions in theatre (i. e., the employers of directors) are held by men. A report on fifty non-profit theatres, Action For Women In Theatre (1976), revealed that only six percent of their productions were directed by women. Women Directing In Theatre (1980) cited that by 1978-79, seventeen percent of the plays produced in those fifty non-profit theatres were directed by women. In the same season women directed forty-two percent of the Off-Off Broadway productions but only four percent of the Broadway productions.³ More recently, the "Directors And Designers Report On Sex Discrimination In Theatre" (1984) by Kay Carney and Julianne Boyd indicated a three percent average for the number of Broadway productions

directed by women.⁴ Statistical work for this study corroborates this consistent under-representation of women directors on Broadway.

The problems of training, employment and acceptance appear to have continued. The "Directors and Designers Report on Sex Discrimination in the Theatre" identified the under-representation of women directors on Broadway as "the Broken Ladder Syndrome." Women directors have not been able to move up the career ladder to higher paying positions in original commercial ventures in any significant number. In order to investigate the reasons for this problem, Carney and Boyd surveyed forty-seven established women directors. All but one of the thirty respondents would like to work on Broadway if they were given the opportunity. The problem is getting nired. Sixty percent of the respondents felt they had been discriminated against in both university and professional training programs. All but one had been encouraged to pursue a career in acting instead of directing. Many women identified the power of networks or cliques as the major stuning olock to advancement. Almost one-third of the women found it necessary to start their own theatres in order to have a regular place to direct. The other two-thirds, freelance directors, said that other women have been their main source of employment. This feeling of discrimination, of needing to start one's own theatre, and the reliance on other women for support parallels many of the

views expressed by early twentieth-century women directors such as Mary Shaw, Rachel Crothers, Jessie Bonstelle, and Eva LeGallienne.

To most Americans, Broadway has always been synonymous with the best in American drama. Whether this is true or not is irrelevant. To work on Broadway is still considered the apex of any theatre person's career. However, statistical surveys indicate that a number of women directors have been unable to reach this apex. Some women suggest that this under-representation is due to discrimination. Writer Elizabeth Janeway noted that historically women have always had to overcome barriers before achieving their goals:

Women's history must therefore deal less with what they have done than with what they have been allowed to do. 6

Further, Helen Krich Chinoy's examination of women in the American theatre noted that:

They have been restricted by blatant prejudice against letting women have any say where big money and decision-making have been involved. . . . 7

However, Chinoy still felt strongly that women may not work on Broadway by choice, that the desire to serve art and the people may outweigh the need to "make a mark in the world."⁸ It is hoped that this debate will be addressed in a future study of the woman director in America after 1950.

NOTES ON CHAPTER VI

1

See statistical chart in Chapter III of this study, pp. 45-46.

2

See statistical chart in Chapter III of this study, pp. 40-42.

3

Helen Krich Chinoy and Linda Walsh Jenkins, Women In American Theatre (New York: Crown Publishers, 1981), pp. 325-326.

4

Kay Carney and Julianne Boyd, "Directors And Designers Report On Sex Discrimination In The Theatre," Women And Performance, 1, No. 2 (1984), p. 46.

5

Carney, pp. 47-50.

6

Elizabeth Janeway, ed., Women: Their Changing Roles (New York: The New York Times, Arno Press, 1978), p. viii.

7

Chinoy, p. 3.

8

Chinoy, p. 9.

APPENDIX

Women Directors On Broadway
1894-1983

The listings in this directory of women directors on Broadway, 1894-1983, were compiled from the appendix of the Charles Cox dissertation, "The Evolution of the Stage Director in America," and the Burns Mantle Best Plays series.

In addition to the date and title of each production, the number of performances is included to present some relative indication of the success or failure of each production. The traditional indicator of a successful New York production is one hundred performances. Some productions fail to reach this mark, however, not because of artistic or commercial failure but because they were scheduled for limited runs. This is particularly true of performances by repertory companies.

The additional information regarding author/adaptor, producer and "also acted" was provided to test the hypothesis that women directors were primarily actresses or playwrights attempting to get their own work produced, or that women directors tended to direct mostly women's plays. A statistical summary of these columns is located in Chapter III, pp. 45-46, of this study. In the case of a performed translation or adaptation, the adaptor, rather than the original author, is indicated since this was the individual

with whom the director may have had a working relationship. "M" indicates male, "F" indicates a female other than the director, "Co" indicates a company such as a repertory company or corporate producing organization, "Unk" indicates unknown, and "Self" indicates the director. An asterik in the "also acted" column means the director appeared as a performer in the production.

Since the accuracy of the Cox listing was not verified against other sources, this listing may not be complete. Two corrections of the Cox list were made: the addition of Harvey directed by Antoinette Perry and the deletion of The Colleen Bawn originally staged by Laura Keane in 1860, not in 1896.

WOMEN DIRECTORS ON BROADWAY
1894-1983

NAME (Birth/Death Date)	No. of	Author/	Producer	Also
Year Title of Play (Co-director)	Perf.	Adapter		Acted
ADLER, STELLA (1904-)				
1943 Manhattan Nocturne	23	M	M	
1945 Polonaise	113	M	M	
1952 Sunday Breakfast	16	M/F	Co	
ALEXANDER, ALICE (-)				
1938 Right This Way (Bertrand Robinaon)	15	F	F	
ALLEN, RAE (-)				
1979 Father's Day	101	M	M	
ANGLIN, MARGARET (1876-1958)				
1927 Electra	12	M	Self	*
1928 Lady Dedlock	40	M	M	*
ARTHUR, HELEN (-1939)				
1924 Grand Street Follies	30+	F	Co	*
ARTHUR, JULIA (1869-1950)				
1916 Serenonda	48	M	Self	*
AVRAMO, CELIA (-)				
1928 The Waltz of the Dogs	35	M	Self	
BAKER, RITA (-)				
1982 Cleavage	1	M	Co	
BERGNER, ELIZABETH (1900-)				
1945 The Overtone	175	M	M	
BERN, MINA (-)				
1966 Let's Sing Yiddish	107	M	M	*
1967 Sing, Israel, Sing	14	M	M	*
1970 Light, Lively & Yiddish	88	M/F	M	*
BERNS, JULIE (-)				
1948 For Heaven's Sake, Mother	7	Self	M	
BINGHAM, AMELIA (1869-1927)				
1907 The Lilac Room	4	F	Self	*
BIRCH, PATRICIA (C. 1934-)				
1977 Happy End (Robert Kalfin)	75	M	M/Co	

		No. of Perf.	Author/ Adapter	Producer	Also Acted
BONSTELLE, JESSIE (1872-1932)					
1912	Little Women (Bertram Harrison)	184	F	M	
1913	The Lady from Oklahoma (Bertram Harrison)	13	F	Self	*
1916	A King of Nowhere (Lou Telegen)	58	M	Co	
1916	Little Women	24	F	M	
1918	I.O.U.	10	M	M	
1918	Home Again	40	M	M	
1921	The Triumph of X (W. H. Gilmore)	30	M	M/Self	
1923	The Enchanted Cottage (William Brady Jr.)	65	M	M	
1929	Now-A-Days	8	M	M	
BOVASSO, JULIE (1930-)					
1970	Gloria and Esperanza	15	Self	Co	*
BOYD, JULIANNE (-)					
1978	Eubie!	439	Self	M	
1980	Onward Victoria	1	F	M	
BRADLEY, LILLIAN TRIMBLE (1875-1959)					
1918	Keep It to Yourself (Mark Swan)	128	M	M	
1919	The Crimson Alibi	51	M	M	
1920	The Wonderful Thing	120	Self	M	
1920	Come Seven	72	M	M	
1921	Tarzan of the Apes	14	M	M	
1921	The Elton Case	17	M	M	
1922	Wild Oats Lane	13	M	M	
1924	Izzy	71	M/Self	M	
BROWN, KATHERINE (-)					
1931	Tom Sawyer (Glenna Tinnin)	6	M	Co	
BROWNELL, MABEL (-)					
1927	Immoral Isabella?	60	M	M	
1928	Mrs. Dane's Defense (Clifford Brooke)	16	M	M	
1928	Within the Law (Clifford Brooke)	16	M	M	
BUSHNELL, ADELYN (-)					
1938	Case History	11	M	M	

	No. of Perf.	Author/ Adapter	Producer	Also Acted
BUTLER, SHIRLEY (-)				
1964 Poor Bitos	17	M	M	
CALDWELL, SARAH (1924-)				
1980 Macbeth	53	M	Co	
CALDWELL, ZOE (1933-)				
1977 An Almost Perfect Person	108	F	F/M	
CALTHROP, GLADYS E. (-)				
1926 John Gabriel Borkman	15	M	Co	
CAMPBELL, MRS. PATRICK (1865-)				
1902 Aunt Jeannie (E. F. Benson)	21	M	M	*
CARNEY, KAY (-)				
1974 Mourning Pictures	1	F	M	
CARROLL, VINNETTE (1922-)				
1972 Don't Bother Me, I Can't Cope	484	F	M	
1976 Your Arms Too Short To Box with God	429	Self	M/Co	
1979 But Never Jam Today	8	Self/M	M/F	
1980 Your Arms Too Short to Box with God	149	Self	M	
1982 Your Arms Too Short to Box with God	70	Self	M/F	
CHATTERTON, RUTH (1893-1961)				
1946 Second Best Bed (N. Richard Nash)	8	M	Self/M	*
COLLIER, CONSTANCE (1878-1955)				
1931 Camille	57	F	Co	
1931 Peter Ibbetson	37	M/Self	M	
1931 Hay Fever	95	M	M	
CORIO, ANN (-)				
1965 This Was Burlesque	114	Self	M	*
1981 This Was Burlesque	28	Self	M/Co	*
COTOPOULI, MARIKA (-1954)				
1930 Elektra	8	M	M/F	*

		No. of Perf.	Author/ Adapter	Producer	Also Acted
COWL, JANE (1890-1950)					
1917	Daybreak (Wilfred North)	71	Self/F	Co	
1928	Diversion	62	M	M	
1929	Paolo and Francesca	16	M	M	*
CRAWFORD, CHERYL (1902-)					
1931	The House of Connelly (Lee Strasberg)	91	M	Co	
1933	Big Night	7	F	Co	
1935	Till The Day I Die	136	M	Co	
1935	Weep for the Virgins	9	F	Co	
CREWS, LAURA HOPE (1880-1942)					
1925	Hay Fever (Noel Coward)	49	M	M	*
CROSBY, VIVIAN (-)					
1930	Queen at Home (Shirley Wade & Courtenay Savage)	16	F/Self	M	
CROSMAN, HENRIETTA (1865-1944)					
1900	Mistress Nell	104	M	Unk	*
1902	As You Like It	60	M	M	*
1902	The Sword of the King (Eugene Presbrey)	48	M	M	*
CROTHERS, RACHEL (1878-1958)					
1908	Myself Bettina	32	Self	F	
1910	A Man's World	71	Self	M	
1913	Ourselves	29	Self	M	
1913	Old Lady	160	Self	M	
1918	Once Upon a Time	24	Self	M	
1918	A Little Journey	252	Self	M	
1919	39 East	160	Self	M	
1920	He and She	28	Self	M	*
1921	Nice People	120+	Self	M	
1921	Everyday	30	Self	F	
1923	Mary the 3rd	152+	Self	M	
1924	Expressing Willie	69+	Self	Co	
1925	The Book of Charm	34	M	Self	
1925	A Lady's Virtue	136	Self	M	
1927	Venus	8	Self	M	
1928	Exceeding Small	72	F	Co	
1929	Let Us Be Gay	132	Self	M	
1931	As Husbands Go	148	Self	M	

		No. of Perf.	Author/ Adapter	Producer	Also Acted
CROTHERS, RACHEL (Cont.)					
1931	Caught Wet	13	Self	M	
1932	When Ladies Meet	173	Self	M	
1933	As Husbands Go	148	Self	M	
1937	Susan and God	288	Self	M	
1940	The Old Foolishness	3	M	M	
CUMMING, DOROTHY (-)					
1939	The Woman Brown	11	Self	F	
DAVENPORT, FANNY (1850-1898)					
1894	Gismonda	88	M	Self	*
DE MILLE, AGNES (-)					
1948	The Rape of Lucretia	23	M	F/M	
1950	Out of This World	157	M	M	
1969	Come Summer	7	M	M	
DEWHURST, COLLEEN (-)					
1981	Ned and Jack	1	M	M	
DICKERSON, GLENDA (-)					
1980	Reggae	21	M	M	
DONNELLY, DOROTHY (1880-1928)					
1923	Poppy (Julian Alfred)	328+	Self	M	
DOYLE, MIRIAM (-1962)					
1933	The Pursuit of Happiness	252	M/F	M	
1934	Tight Britches	23	M		
1936	Black Widow	7	M	M	
1937	Merely Murder	3	M	M	
DRESSLER, MARIE (1869-1934)					
1914	A Mix-Up	88	M	M	*
DUNHAM, KATHERINE (-)					
1945	Carib Song (Mary Hunter)	36	M	M	
1946	Bal Negre	52	Self	M	*
1950	Katherine Dunham	37	Self	M	*
EGNOS, BERTHA (-)					
1977	IPI-Tombi	39	Self	M	

		No. of Perf.	Author/ Adapter	Producer	Also Acted
ELLIS, EDITH (-1960)					
1909	The Return of Eve	29	M	M	
1909	The Lottery Man	200	F	M	
1911	Seven Sisters	32	Self	M	
1917	The Imaginary Invalid	8	F	M/F	
1925	Starlight	71	F	M	
ELLIS, EVELYN (1900-1958)					
1950	Tobacco Road	7	M	M	*
EYTINGE, ROSE (1835-1911)					
1895	Benedict Arnold	1	M	Unk	
FIELDING, MARJORIE (1892-1956)					
1942	Priorities of 1942	353	M	M	
FISKE, MINNIE MADDERN (1865-1932)					
1897	Tess of the D'Urbervilles	88	M	Self	*
1899	Becky Sharp (Fred Williams)	116	M	Self	*
1901	The Unwelcome Mrs. Hatch (Max Figman)	63	F	M	*
1902	Mary of Magdala (Harrison Grey Fiske)	105	M	M	*
1906	The New York Idea (Harrison Grey Fiske)	66	M	M	*
1908	Salvation Nell (Harrison Grey Fiske)	71	M	M	*
1911	Becky Sharp (Harrison Grey Fiske)	16	M	M	*
1912	The High Road (Harrison Grey Fiske)	71	M	M	*
FITZGERALD, GERALDINE (1914-)					
1981	Mass Appeal	214	M	F/M	
FOCH, NINA (1924-)					
1967	Tonight at 8:30 (G. Wood & Jack Sydow)	5	M	Co	
FRANKEN, ROSE (1898-)					
1941	Claudia	477	Self	M	
1943	Outrageous Fortune	77	Self	M	
1943	Doctors Disagree	23	Self	M	
1944	Soldier's Wife	253	Self	M	
1948	The Hallams	12	Self	M	

	No. of Perf.	Author/ Adapter	Producer	Also Acted
FREDERICK, PAULINE (1885-1938)				
1932 House Warming	4	M	F	
1934 Her Majesty The Widow	32	M	Co	*
FREDRIK, BURRY (1925-)				
1971 Wild and Wonderful	1	M	M	
FREEMAN, HELEN (-)				
1921 The Great Way (Reginald Pole)	8	M/Self	Unk	*
GANNAWAY, LYNNE (-)				
1979 Strider (Robert Kalfin)	214	M	M/F	
GARDINER, BECKY (-)				
1929 Damn Your Honor (Bayard Veiller)	8	M/Self	M	
GEORGE, GRACE (1879-1961)				
1921 Marie Antoinette (John Crumwell)	16	M	Unk	*
1922 To Love	55	Self	Self	*
1929 The First Mrs. Fraser	352	M	Unk	*
GERBER, ELLA (1916-)				
1950 Design for a Stained Glass Window	8	M	M	
GERMANOVA, MARIA (1884-1940)				
1930 A Glass of Water	9	M	Unk	*
GIBSON, CHLOE (1899-)				
1948 Power Without Glory	31	M	M	
1950 Edwina Black	15	M	M	
GIEHSE, THERESE (-)				
1937 The Pepper Mill	6	M	M	*
GREELY, AUGUSTA (-)				
1930 Penal Law 2010	19	M/Self	M	
HAJOS, MITZI (1891-)				
1930 Sari	15	M	M	*
HAMMOND, LYNN (-)				
1914 The Elder Son	23	M	M	

	No. of Perf.	Author/ Adapter	Producer	Also Acted
HARRIS, BARBARA (-)				
1969 The Penny Wera	5	M	M	
HARRIS, RENE (-)				
1918 Nancy Lee	63	M	Co	
HATHAWAY, JOAN (-)				
1936 Searching for the Sun (Julius Evans)	5	M	M	
HAVOC, JUNE (1916-)				
1963 Marathon '33	48	Self	Co	
HAYDEN, TERESE (-)				
1951 Dinosaur Wharf	4	M	Self	
HEDMAN, MARTHA (1888-)				
1926 What's the Big Idea	23	Self/M	M	
HELBURN, THERESA (1887-1959)				
1932 Chrysalis	23	F	M/Self	
1933 Mary of Scotland	248	M	Co	
1937 The Ghost of Yankee Doodle (John Cromwell & Lawrence Langner)	48	M	Co	
1947 Allegro (Lawrence Langner)	315	M	Co	
HELLMAN, LILLIAN (1907-1984)				
1946 Another Part of the Forest	182	Self	M	
1949 Montserrat	65	Self	M	
1952 The Children's Hour	189+	Self	M	
HENTSCHEL, IRENE (1891-)				
1938 Time and the Conways (J. B. Priestley)	32	M	M	
HEWES, MARGARET (-)				
1934 Roll, Sweet Chariot (Em Jo Bashe & Stanley Pratt)	7	M	Self	
HILDRETH, MARJORIE (-)				
1946 Respectfully Yours	16	F	Co	
HOFFMAN, GERTRUDE (-1966)				
1927 A Night in Spain (Charles Judels)	222	M	M	

		No. of Perf.	Author/ Adapter	Producer	Also Acted
HOLLAND, MILDRED (1869-1944)					
1911	The Triumph of an Express	32	M	M	*
1911	The Lily and the Prince (George Paxton)	8	M	M	*
1911	Camille (George Paxton)	8	M	M	*
HOLM, HANYA (-)					
1960	Christine	12	F/M	M	
HOPE, VIDA (1918-1963)					
1954	The Boy Friend	485	M	M	
HULL, ELIZABETH (-)					
1938	The Hill Between	11	F	M	
HULL, JOSEPHINE (1886-1957)					
1922	Why Not? (O. P. Heggie)	120	M	Co	
1923	The Rivals	24	M	Co	
1924	The Habitual Husband (Dudley Digges)	12	M	Co	
HUMPHREY, DORIS (-1958)					
1950	The Barrier	4	M	M	
HUNTER, MARY (1904-)					
1944	Only the Heart	47	M	Co	
1945	Carib Song (Katherine Dunham)	36	M	M	
1948	The Respectful Prostitute/The Happy Journey to Trenton and Camden	348	F M	Co	
1948	Ballet Ballads	69	M	M	
1950	Great to Be Alive	52	M/F	M	
IRWIN, MAY (1862-1938)					
1898	Kate Kip, Buyer	128	M	Unk	*
JANIS, ELSIE (1889-1956)					
1925	Puzzles of 1925	104	Self	M	*
1934	New Faces	149	M	M	

		No. of Perf.	Author/ Adapter	Producer	Also Acted
JONES, MARGO (1913-1955)					
1945	The Glass Menagerie	88	M	M	
1946	On Whitman Avenue	150	F	M	
1946	Joan of Lorraine	199	M	Co	
1948	Summer and Smoke	100	M	Self	
1950	Southern Exposure	23	M	Self/M	
KAMINSKA, IDA (1899-)					
1967	Mirele Efros	42	Self	M/F	*
1967	Mother Courage and her Children	11	Self	M/F	*
KATZIN, OLGA (-)					
1929	The Novice and the Duke	28	Self	M	
KIRKWOOD, KATHLEEN (-)					
1926	Bare Facts of 1926	107	M	Self	
KRUPSKA, DANIA (1923-)					
1959	The Most Happy Fella	16	M	Co	
1961	Show Boat	14	M	Co	
1962	Fiorello!	16	M	Co	
KUMMER, CLARE (-1958)					
1921	The Mountain Man (Edward Elmer)	163	Self	M	
LANDIS, JESSIE ROYCE (-)					
1944	Little Women	23	F	M	
1946	Lovely Me	37	F	M	
LANGTRY, LILLY (1852-1929)					
1895	Gossip (Clyde Fitch)	24	M	Unk	*
LA VERNE, LUCILLE (1872-1945)					
1928	Sun-Up	101	F	Self	*
1928	Hot Water	32	F	Self	*
LAWLESS, SUE (-)					
1981	The Five O'Clock Girl	14	M	M	
LAZAREFF, ELSA (-)					
1932	Dangerous Corner	206	M	M	

		No. of Perf.	Author/ Adapter	Producer	Also Acted
LEE, AURIOL (1880-1941)					
1930	Nine Till Six	25	M/F	M	*
1931	After All	20	M	M	
1932	There's Always Juliet	108	M	M	
1934	Oliver, Oliver	11	M	M	
1934	The Distaff Side	177	M	M/Self	
1935	Times Have Changed	32	M	M	
1935	Flowers of the Forest	40	M	F	
1935	Most of the Game	23	M	M/Self	
1935	Eden End	24	M	M	
1936	Love From a Stranger	31	M	M	
1939	I Know What I Like	11	M	M	
1940	Leave Her to Heaven	15	M	M	
1940	Old Acquaintance	170	M	M	
LE GALLIENNE, EVA (1899-)					
1925	The Master Builder	76	M	Unk	*
1926	Saturday Night	13	M	Co	*
1926	Three Sisters	39	M	Co	*
1926	The Master Builder	29	M	Co	*
1926	La Locandiera	31	F	Co	*
1926	Twelfth Night	26	M	Co	*
1927	Inheritors	17	F	Co	*
1928	The First Stone	3	M	Co	*
1928	Improvisations in June	14	F/M	Co	*
1928	Hedda Gabler	15	F/M	Co	*
1928	The Would-Be Gentleman	34	M	Co	
1928	L'Invitation Au Voyage	19	M	Co	*
1928	The Cherry Orchard	63	F	Co	*
1928	Peter Pan	48	M	Co	*
	(J. Blake Scott)				
1928	The Lady from Alfaceque	17	F/M	Co	
1929	Katerina	19	M	Co	
1929	The Sea Gull	63	F	Co	*
1929	The Cherry Orchard	14	F	Co	*
1929	Mademoiselle Bourrat	26	M	Co	
1930	The Open Door/ The Women Have Their Way	25	M	Co	*
1930	Romeo and Juliet	16	M	Co	*
1930	Romeo and Juliet	44	M	Co	*
1930	Siegfried	23	M	Co	*
1930	Alison's House	41	F	Co	*
1932	Lilium	35	M	Co	*
1932	Dear Jane	11	F	Co	*
1932	Alice in Wonderland	127	Self/F	Co	*
1933	The Cherry Orchard	30	F	Self	*
1934	L'Aiglon	58	M	M	*

		No. of Perf.	Author/ Adapter	Producer	Also Acted
LE GALLIENNE, EVA (Cont.)					
1935	Rosmersholm	8	Self	Self	*
1935	Camille	7	F	Self	*
1935	A Sunny Morning/The Women Have Their Way	1	M	Self	*
1941	Ah, Wilderness!	29	M	Co	
1942	The Rivals	54	M	Co	
1944	The Cherry Orchard (Margaret Webster)	96	F	F	*
1944	The Cherry Orchard	8	F	F	*
1946	John Gabriel Borkman	21	M	Co	*
1947	Alice in Wonderland	100	Self/F	F/Co	
1964	The Seagull	16	Self	Co	*
1967	The Cherry Orchard	38	Self	Co	
1982	Alice in Wonderland (J. Strasberg)	21	Self/F	F/M	*
LENIHAN, WINIFRED (1898-1964)					
1924	The Mongrel	32	M	M	
1930	Blind Mice	14	F/Self	M	
1931	The Pillars of Society	2	M	Co	
LEONTOVICH, EUGENIE (1900-)					
1974	Medea and Jason	1	Self	F	
LEWISOHN, IRENE (-)					
1924	The Little Clay Cart (Agnes Morgan)	72	M	Co	*
1926	The Little Clay Cart (Agnes Morgan)	39	M	Co	*
1927	Pinwheel	4	M	Co	
1935	Bitter Oleander	24	M	Co	
LITTLEWOOD, JOAN (-)					
1960	The Hostage	127	M	M/F	
1964	Oh, What a Lovely War	125	M/Co	M	
LOHR, MARIE (1890-)					
1922	The Voice from the Minaret	13	M	Self	*
1922	Fedora	12	M	Self	*
LOOS, ANITA (1893-)					
1931	The Social Register	97	Self/M	M	
LOWE, KAY (-)					
1934	Picnic	2	F	M	
MARQUIS, MARJORIE (-1936)					
1932	The Dark Hours	8	M	M	

		No. of Perf.	Author/ Adapter	Producer	Also Acted
MAUGHAM, DORA (-)					
1943	Hairpin Harmony	3	M	M	
MAYNARD, MARJORIE (-)					
1943	Goodbye Again	8	M	F	
MC FADDEN, ELIZABETH (-)					
1933	Double Door	143	Self	M	
MAYO, MARGARET (1882-1951)					
1913	Her First Divorce	8	M	M	
1914	Twin Beds	411	M/Self	M	
1920	Seeing Things (Aubrey Kennedy)	103	Self/M	M	
MEISER, EDITH (1898-)					
1936	Double Dummy	21	F/M	M	
MORGAN, AGNES (1880?-)					
1922	R.U.R. (Philip Moeller)	184	M	Co	
1924	The Little Clay Cart (Irene Lewisohn)	72	M	Co	
1925	Exiles	41	M	Co	
1925	The Legend of the Dance	37	Self	Co	
1925	The Critic (Ian MacLaren)	17	M	Co	
1926	The Romantic Young Lady	25	F/M	Co	
1926	Grand Street Follies	148	Self	Co	*
1926	The Lion Tamer	29	F	Co	
1926	The Little Clay Cart (Irene Lewisohn)	39	M	Co	
1927	Grand Street Follies	30	Self	Co	*
1927	Lovers and Enemies	2	F	Co	
1927	If	27	M	Co	
1928	Maya	15	M	Co	
1928	Grand Street Follies	144	Self	Co	
1929	Grand Street Follies of 1929	93	Self	Co	
1931	If Love Were All	11	M	Co	
1936	American Holiday	20	M	Co	
1936	Class of '29	29+	M	Co	
1938	A Hero Is Born	50	F	Co	
1942	Papa Is All (Frank Carrington)	63	M	Co	
1942	I Killed the Count (Frank Carrington)	29	M	M/Self	

		No. of Perf.	Author/ Adapter	Producer	Also Acted
MOSES, ELSA (-)					
1937	Western Waters (Richard Carlson)	7	M	Self	
NATHAN, ADELE GUTMAN (-)					
1928	The Dark Mirror	32	M	Co	
1929	The Subway	35	M	Co	
NAZIMOVA, ALLA (1879-1945)					
1935	Ghosts	81	M	M	*
1936	Hedda Gabler	32	M	M	*
NICHOLS, ANNE (-1966)					
1936	Pre-Honeymoon (Alford Van Ronkel)	255	M/Self	Self	
1937	Abie's Irish Rose	46	Self	Self	
1954	Abie's Irish Rose	20	Self	M	
OSBORN, MRS. (-)					
1902	Tommy Rot (Joseph Herbert & Lewis Hooper)	39	M	Self	
PACE, JEAN (-)					
1969	Buck White (Oscar Brown, Jr.)	7	M	M/Co	
PARKER, LOTTIE BLAIR (-1937)					
1916	Backfire (Walter Lawrence)	64	M	M	
PERRY, ANTOINETTE (1888-1946)					
1928	Goin' Home (Brock Pemberton)	76	M	M	
1928	Hotbed (Brock Pemberton)	19	M	M	
1929	Strictly Dishonorable (Brock Pemberton)	557	M	M	
1931	Three Times the Hour (Brock Pemberton)	23	M	M	
1931	Divorce Me, Dear	7	F	M	
1932	Christopher Comes Across (Brock Pemberton)	7	M	M	
1934	Personal Appearance (Brock Pemberton)	501	M	M	
1935	Ceiling Zero	104	M	M	
1937	Now You've Done It	43	F	M	
1937	Chalked Out	12	M	M	
1938	Eye On the Sparrow	6	M	M	
1938	Kiss the Boys Goodbye	286	F	M	

		No. of Perf.	Author/ Adapter	Producer	Also Acted
PERRY, ANTOINETTE (Cont.)					
1940	Lady in Waiting	87	F	M	
1940	Out from Under	9	M	M	
1940	Glamour Preferred	11	F/M	M	
1941	Cuckoos on the Hearth	129	M	M	
1942	Janie	642	F/M	M	
1943	Pillar to Post	31	F	M	
1944	Harvey	1,775	F	M	
PERRY, ELAINE (1921-)					
1965	A Race of Hairy Men!	4	M	Self/M	
PERRY, MARGARET (1913-)					
1949	The Shop at Sly Corner	7	M	M	
1949	Love Me Long (Brock Pemberton)	16	F	M	
1950	Mr. Barry's Etchings (Brock Pemberton)	31	M	M	
RASCH, ALBERTINA (-1967)					
1927	Rufus Le Maire's Affair (William Halligan & Jack Hascall)	56	M	M	
1927	Earl Carroll's Sketch Book (Florenz Ziegfield & Bobby Connolly)	Unk	Unk	Unk	
SAGAN, LEONTINE (1889-)					
1936	O Evening Star	5	F	M	
SELDES, MARIAN (1928-)					
1973	Next Time I'll Sing For You	2	M	Co	
SHAW, MARY (1860-1929)					
1913	Countess Julia	3	M	Unk	
1917	Mrs. Warren's Profession	Unk	M	Co	*
1922	Mrs. Warren's Profession	25	M	Self	*
SOREL, FELICIA (-)					
1939	Pina and Needles of (Robert Gordon)	1939 680	M	Co	
SUTCLIFFE, ALISON (-)					
1983	Edmund Kean	29	M	M/F	

	No. of Perf.	Author/ Adapter	Producer	Also Acted
SWADOS, ELIZABETH (1951-)				
1978 Runaways	267	Self	Co/M	
TAMARIS, HELEN (1905-1966)				
1938 Trojan Incident (Harold Bolton)	26	M	Co	*
TAYLOR, ETHEL (-)				
1931 Mias Gulliver's Travels	21	M/Self	M	*
TINNIN, GLENNA (-)				
1931 Tom Sawyer (Katherine Brown)	6	M	Co	
TOMLIN, LILY (1939-)				
1977 Lily Tomlin in "Appearing Nightly" (Jane Wagner)	84	F/Self	M	*
TOTTEN, EDYTH (-)				
1927 Babbling Brookes	3	M	M	*
TREADWELL, SOPHIE (1890-1970)				
1933 Lone Valley	3	Self	Self	
TRESKOFF, OLGA (1902-1938)				
1934 The O'Flynn (Max Fisman)	11	M	M	
VAN VOLKENBURG, ELLEN (-)				
1931 The Venetian	9	M	M	
1937 Tobias and the Angel	22	M	Co	
1947 Eastward in Eden	15	F	F	
VICTOR, JOSEPHINE (1885-)				
1931 Doctor X	80	M	M	
VICTOR, LUCIA (-)				
1971 Ari	19	M	M	
1972 Heathen!	1	M	M	
1975 Hello, Dolly!	51	M	M	
1978 Hello, Dolly!	145	M	M	
WAGNER, JANE (-)				
1977 Lily Tomlin in "Appearing Nightly" (Lily Tomlin)	84	Self/F	M	

		No. of Perf.	Author/ Adapter	Producer	Also Acted
WALKER, NANCY (1922-)					
1966	U.T.B.U.	7	M	F	
WARDE, SHIRLEY (-)					
1930	Queen at Home (Vivian Crosby & Courtenay Savage)	16	F/Self	M	
WEBSTER, MARGARET (1905-1972)					
1937	King Richard II (Charles Allen)	133	M	M	
1937	King Richard II	38	M	M	
1937	Young Mr. Disraeli	6	M	M	
1938	Hamlet	96	M	M	
1939	Henry IV, Part 1	74	M	M	
1939	Family Portrait	111	F/M	F/M	*
1939	Hamlet	40	M	M	
1940	King Richard II	Unk	M	M	
1941	Macbeth	131	M	M	
1942	Flare Path	14	M	M	
1943	Counterattack	85	F/M	M	
1943	Othello	296	M	Co	*
1944	The Cherry Orchard (Eva LeGallienne)	96	F	F/Self	
1944	Othello	24	M	Co	
1945	The Tempest	100	M	F	
1945	The Tempest	24	M	F	
1945	Therese	96	M	M	
1946	Henry VIII	40	M	Co	*
1946	What Every Woman Knows	21	M	Co	
1946	Androcles & The Lion	40	M	Co	
1948	Ghosts	10	F	M/Co	
1948	Hedda Gabler	15	F	M/Co	
1950	The Devil's Disciple	127	M	Co	
1951	King Richard II	15	M	Co	
1951	The Taming of the Shrew	15	M	Self/Co	
1951	Saint Joan	142	M	Co	
1953	The Strong Are Lonely	7	F	M	
1953	Richard III	15	M	Co	
1958	Back to Methuselah	29	M	Co/M	
1962	The Aspern Papers	93	M	M	
WEST, MAE (1892-)					
1928	Diamond Lil	78+	Self	M	*
WHEATLEY, JANE (1881-1935)					
1933	Dangerous Corner	206	M	M	*
WHITE, ONNA (-)					
1970	Gantry	1	M	M	

		No. of Perf.	Author/ Adapter	Producer	Also Acted
WILCK, LAURA D. (-)					
1929	Thunder in the Air (Cowles Strickland)	16	M	M	
WINWOOD, ESTELLE (1883-)					
1939	The Importance of Being Earnest	61	M	M	*
WYCHERLY, MARGARET (1884-1956)					
1923	Florian's Wife (Henry Stillman)	16	F	F	*
1926	The Unchastened Woman (Edward Goodman)	31	M	Co	
YURIKO, AMENIYA (1920-)					
1977	The King and I	696	M	M/F	
YURKA, BLANCHE (1887-)					
1928	The Wild Duck	80	M	Co	*
1929	Hedda Gabler	25	M	Co	*
1930	The Vikings	8	M	M	*
1932	Carry Nation	30	M	M	

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THE RISE OF THE WOMAN DIRECTOR ON BROADWAY,
1920-1950

by

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AN ABSTRACT OF A MASTER'S THESIS

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Using the Burns Mantle Best Plays yearbook series, a statistical review of Broadway productions and directors reveals that in 1894, 3.23 percent of the plays were directed by a woman. In 1983 that figure was 2.38 percent. While these polar figures suggest that there has been little change in the last ninety years, there were important variations. Most significantly, from 1920 to 1950 there was a rise in the percentage of women directors on Broadway from three percent in 1919 to thirteen percent in 1950. After 1950 the percentages declined and by 1955 the figure was zero. The three decade period of 1920-1950 represents the peak period of success for the woman director on Broadway. This study statistically documents that rise, investigates the factors that hampered women, suggests forces that contributed to the emergence of the woman director, and surveys the careers of the major female directors of the period, 1920-1950.

A listing of Broadway productions and directors from 1894 to 1950 based on the Burns Mantle series is located in the appendix of the Charles Wright Cox dissertation, "The Evolution of the Stage Director in America" (1957). As preliminary work to this study, the list was extended through 1983 using the same source and criteria as the Cox study. From these combined lists the data on women directors on Broadway for the entire period of 1894 to 1983 were extracted and analyzed.

Although the profession of stage directing arose as a

specialty beginning about 1895, the emergence of the woman director was delayed due to three factors: 1) the role of the director as autocrat and technical expert, 2) entrance to the profession through the male-dominated profession of stage manager, and 3) the predominance of male producers, as typified by the Syndicate, who hired few women directors.

By 1910 both as audience members and as performers, some women began to grow dissatisfied with the American drama as it was shaped and controlled by men. In order to promote more quality drama, women needed to have greater control. To meet this need, women organized professional clubs and drama societies to provide networks and education for themselves. They helped organize little theatre groups in which they could gain experience as producers and directors. By 1920 these better-educated and more experienced women were able to find more employment as directors in commercial theatres.

The rise of the woman director after 1920 was aided by: 1) the change in the role of the director to one of interpretive artist and psychologist, 2) increased equality for women in general, 3) economic prosperity which allowed more productions and greater risk-taking in the choice of drama, and 4) the shift in production control to theatre companies (many of which had originated in the Little Theatre movement) and to such men as the Shuberts who regularly hired women directors. The rise of the woman director continued through the 1940s by which time women were able to directly

enter the profession instead of going through the previously prescribed route of acting or playwriting.

After 1950 the percentage of women directors on Broadway sharply declined due to 1) a general change in societal attitudes back to traditional values and 2) increasing production costs which forced producers to make more conservative investment decisions. With the change in attitudes and types of drama produced, women directors, both voluntarily and involuntarily, left the Broadway stage.

The story of this struggle, the attainment of temporary success and the later curtailment of opportunities is best revealed through the lives and work of some the women themselves. Nine American women were chosen for closer study on the basis of having been the most repeatedly employed women directors on Broadway. Jessie Bonstelle, Rachel Crothers, Lillian Trimble Bradley, Agnes Morgan, Eva LeGallienne, Antoinette Perry, Margaret Webster, Mary Hunter, and Margo Jones each directed five or more productions on Broadway during the period 1915-1950. Their Broadway careers span the entire first half of the twentieth century. The similarities and differences between the routes they took to become directors give a fairly clear indication of the struggles faced and the success attained by many women during this time period. The desire to produce quality drama at affordable prices, frustrations because of discrimination,

the need to start independent theatres, and the reliance on other women for employment and support were repeated themes found in the examination of the lives and careers of these and other women directors in the twentieth century.