

foundation on which it was built. Precedent, however, makes the possibility of that happening most unlikely.

Kenneth H. Brown

EUGENIE LEONTOVICH

The Editors:

It has come to my attention that certain of my remarks made in relation to Mme. Eugenie Leontovich ["Reality Is Not Enough," T27] have been interpreted as either criticism of Mme. Leontovich or a distortion of her approach to acting [see TDR Letters, T29]. I would like to state that my intention was unrelated to either of these two unexpected results.

In my opinion, Mme. Leontovich is one of the most gifted and organic of actresses; her approach could not be described on the more superficial level as being merely an "external" one. And I am indeed aware of her Method training and orientation both as an actress and teacher of acting! Perhaps in my desire to contrast two different personalities I overstressed one particular aspect of her craft.

Alan Schneider

DOLLARS AND DRAMA

The Editors:

I am impressed—very much so—and convinced by Richard Schechner's lead-off piece in the *Dollars and Drama* issue (T29). The focus upon the problems of values, class audiences, and the artists' alienation could not be better. . . .

However, Schechner's statement of the alternatives seems somewhat less than full. It is a fact, for instance, that New York City has pioneered in taking productions of Shakespeare and Span-



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ish-language classics around to the ghetto publics. No doubt these efforts reek more of philanthropy than they speak of an effort to communicate values relevant to today, and one looks in vain for production and interpretive techniques truly dictated by the new audience. Yet here is a beginning. In San Francisco, R. G. Davis has sought the audience of the students and poor—and he has provided theatre suited in content and staging to this public. His work parallels that of the Free Southern Theater, which Schechner did mention.

The problems facing the city-and-privately-financed ghetto performances are distinct from those of the FST and Davis. The former have the difficulty Schechner has well defined in respect to the foundation-aided repertory theatres: in effect, the Establishment is asked to finance artistic organizations which propagate values more or less directly in conflict with it. I am not hopeful that this will happen to any meaningful degree.

On the other hand, FST and Davis have already located their minority publics and are functioning within dissenting value systems. Their problem is one of support. Where are they to get it? Schechner does not examine this problem with much sense of the possibilities.

Historically, the organized financial backing of theatres opposed to middle-class values has come from the labor movement, which in every instance was cajoled and convinced by artists and intellectuals devoted to essentially revolutionary values.

The first labor-backed theatre, the *Freie Volksbühne* of Berlin, was started in 1890, just three years after Antoine's *Théâtre Libre*, which was the first "little theatre" of dissenting values in the world. Europe has known many subse-

quent labor-supported theatres. In France today, the industrial suburbs of Paris and Lyons elect Communist officials who, in turn, support municipal theatres which are based on revolutionary values. Roger Planchon's company is the best example. And in England, the labor movement has given extensive backing to Arnold Wesker's Center 42 project.

I do not know of any current American examples. Yet labor-backed theatre did exist here, powerfully, in the 1930's and again for a time after the war. The Theatre Union of New York was but the leading instance among dozens of such theatres in America. . . .

We know very well that conditions have changed, and the leadership of the labor unions now dissents in few particulars from the values of the middle class. Yet not all unions have gone along—remember the film, *Salt of the Earth*, produced by the Mine, Mill, and Smelters Union? And not all locals agree with their national leadership. There is reason to believe also that on some issues, particularly those of job dignity as distinct from wages (which union leaders look after very well), the workers in America remain restive and alienated, even from their leadership. Cannot these resources be tapped anew for a theatre of dissent?

Lee Baxandall

OEDIPUS VERSUS SHERLOCK HOLMES

The Editors

...I should like to point out that several commentators have spotted certain "improbabilities" in the plot of *Oedipus*. The most important of these raises the question of how *Oedipus*, married to *Jocasta* for many

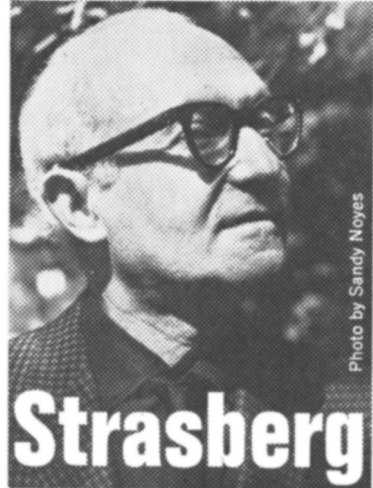


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VIKING

years and king of Thebes, had *not* come to hear or had *not* asked to know the details of Laius' murder.

In terms of cold logic, of course, the question is not unjustified. Those