

SPECTATORS, THEATRE TYPES AND THE SOCIAL PURPOSES OF THE THEATRE

Four Types of Theatre

The material I am presenting here is based on a small portion of my research on audiences for different types of theatre. Although categorizing them is not a straightforward matter, they may be described as establishment-mainstream, radical-mainstream, workplace-community theatre and bilingual-bicultural theatre. The theatre companies/venues and productions which I have taken to represent these four types are as follows: *Three Sisters* directed by Richard Wherrett in 1990 at the Sydney Theatre Company; *The Tempest* directed by Neil Armfield in 1990 at the Belvoir Street Theatre in Sydney, and *Love and Magic in Mamma's Kitchen* directed by Teresa Crea in 1991 at the same theatre; *No Fear* directed by Joan Murray in 1991 for the Melbourne Workers Theatre; *Tinti di rosso/Red Like the Devil* directed by Teresa Crea and performed by Doppio Teatro in 1991 in Canberra as part of the Australian Theatre Festival. The bilingual title of Doppio's production indicates that it was performed in Italian and English, both languages being more or less evenly mixed for the whole show. The company's very name - "doppio" means "dual" or "double" - shows clearly its aim of developing its work from two languages and two cultures.

It must be noted further that, although *Love and Magic* and *Red Like the Devil* were directed by the same person, they were not performed by the same performance group. *Love and Magic*, in other words, was not a Doppio Teatro production. It was staged on the initiative of Belvoir Street as this theatre's contribution to Carnivalé, the annual, so-called "multicultural" festival held in Sydney where non-Anglo/Celtic "ethnics" - generally, though not exclusively, those who live in or near the metropolis - showcase their particular heritage and talents. What is displayed, then -

often with great flair and vitality - ranges from the folk arts of cooking, costumes, dance and music to the more formal arts of play production, poetry reading, concert recitals, and so on. Since Belvoir Street makes a point of welcoming performance groups that have quite different artistic and gender politics and styles, *Love and Magic*, for all its linkage with "multiculturalism", can be considered without any difficulty as a Belvoir Street production. Teresa Crea was sure in her own mind as to how *Love and Magic*, albeit not to be confused with her usual Doppio work, fitted into her artistic biography. She explained in an interview I conducted with her in Canberra that members of Doppio work collaboratively, generally taking three months of preparation for a show. During this time they work hard physically on scenes, moulding them and the text used for them according to their explorations together. A draft text is usually prepared in the months preceding the workshops, as occurred in the case of *Red Like the Devil* whose material Crea had researched and assembled before Doppio colleagues tried it out for elaboration and refinement. This process of collective preparation for a text and a show where the two organically grow out of each other has nothing in common with the rules of play of mainstream theatre. The rules provide, to boot, a statutory four to six weeks of rehearsal, which allows little time for experimentation with physical movement and expression from whose immediacy artistic decisions may be made collectively. *Love and Magic*, while shaped by Crea in the light of her experiences with Doppio, essentially had to stay within the managerial and practical limits set by Belvoir Street Theatre for productions mounted under its auspices.

Nevertheless, although *Love and Magic* is to be put under the heading of radical-mainstream theatre, it must be cross-referenced with *Tinti di rosso/Red Like the Devil* because of its affinity with the bilingual and bicultural world of the latter. *Love and Magic* intermittently uses Italian - sometimes rather extensively, as occurs in the opening scenes - in order to stress the play's cultural context, the production's cultural horizons and the director's and actresses' cultural origins. All but one of the seven actresses who perform in the show are of Italian background, north or south. Teresa Crea's family is from the south. The script is by Lina Wertmuller, who is from the north. It is the second and last that she wrote for the stage. Wertmuller, of course, is highly celebrated internationally for her zany films, most of which show the clash between northern and southern social structures, belief systems, mores and customs - the northern, industrial sphere asserting its hegemony over the rural, economically impoverished south. The motifs, emotional and imaginative

excesses, and dark humour of Wertmuller's films mark the script of *Love and Magic* deeply.

A few more points regarding the typology of radical-mainstream theatre should now be included in the discussion. Audience members who completed questionnaires distributed by me in both 1990 for *The Tempest* and 1991 for *Love and Magic* invariably refer to Belvoir Street as "innovative", "experimental", "risk-taking" and "off-beat". These terms are among numerous variations on a theme that draws attention to the specific character of this theatre venue and how it differs from other well-established, well-viewed theatres. Comparison between theatres, which was not solicited by my questionnaires, was volunteered spontaneously by spectators. Thus they tend to cite the Sydney Theatre Company as a point of reference. The STC, in their opinion, is a mainstream theatre from which Belvoir Street must be distinguished. When they use the term "mainstream" for Belvoir Street, which happens frequently in their remarks either on the production being surveyed or on what they like generally about productions at the theatre, they almost invariably qualify the term with some complimentary statement as if to show that "mainstream" is not being used in a pejorative way. Hence phrases like, for instance, "mainstream, but risk-taking" or "mainstream, but original" appear in spectators' remarks. Descriptions by spectators like the ones I have just cited, together with the general reputation enjoyed by Belvoir Street Theatre as well as its management's goal of keeping it in the mainstream without, however, forgoing its "avant-garde" aspirations, help explain why I am using the name "radical-mainstream" for it. Armfield, whose production of *The Tempest* was received enthusiastically - and sometimes rapturously - by most of my respondents, is something of an in-house director of Belvoir Street and may be said to have contributed greatly to its reputation for originality and artistic quality, which these respondents seemed to think of as a feature of "good" mainstream theatre.

There is another important link between the productions chosen for survey, other than the one between *Love and Magic* and *Red Like the Devil*. The link, this time, concerns *The Tempest* and *Three Sisters*. These two productions were performed within a few months of each other, *The Tempest* coming first. Their consecutive appearance on the Sydney stage suited my research purposes in that my project as a whole incorporated a number of questions concerning classics. One of them had to do with how audiences interact with classics mounted at different theatres. My assumption was that different theatres acquire different styles over a given working period; also, that they project the vision of their artistic director

or mainstage director, this projection being part and parcel of their “house” style. At the STC, for example, the title of Chekhov’s play lost its customary article “the” because director Richard Wherrett wished to extrapolate from Chekhov’s Russian world and give its situations universal meaning. In other words, in Wherrett’s view, the unfulfilled hopes and dreams of three particular sisters could well reflect the disillusionment of any three sisters anywhere in the world. Richard Wherrett was the founding director (1979) of the Sydney Theatre Company, from which he resigned in 1990 - *Three Sisters* being his last work for the company - to become the director of the Melbourne International Festival (formerly the Spoleto Festival founded by Gian Carlo Menotti, who is the founder of the Italian original). The STC is a state theatre subsidized by both the state and federal governments in accordance with its official status (hence the term “establishment” for it).

It is interesting to note that Wherrett’s conception of this particular classic as having general applicability across social time and space is echoed by quite a large number of spectators. One of my questions asks them what they think a Russian classic has to say to audiences in Australia today. Again and again spectators explain that classics are “universal” and “timeless”, and deal with the “human condition” which, because it is a condition of being human as such, is eternal and can never change. The spectators in the sample, in other words, interact with the production *within* the parameters set by the director. Or else, putting it differently, they share the director’s viewpoint on what defines classics. It could perhaps also be claimed that the concordance between Wherrett and those spectators who are in tune with him is due to the climate of interdependence built up between the STC, Wherrett’s productions during the years he spent there, and their audiences over the same period of time. We should also consider the hypothesis that an interactive climate of the kind at play here is fostered by what may be called the dominant culture. The culture holding sway may well be generating and propagating through the institutional channels at its disposal (theatre houses, the media, schools and other educational institutions, and so forth) the idea that theatre classics are unbounded, universal and “timeless” rather than phenomena bounded by, though not necessarily restricted to, the societies and cultures from which they emerge.

The whole issue of how so-called classics are spatially, geographically and culturally specific and yet able to cross cultural borders and communicate sense is indeed very large. It involves, among many aspects, the strictures of time. The passage of time and, with it, the processes of

history *do* make plays and productions outdated, outmoded, and even irrelevant in respect of a short time-span. The very same thing occurs across long periods of societal development. Are some of the plays which are deemed to be outmoded “classics”? Why, when and for whom are designated works “classics”? And when, why and for whom do they cease to exist as “classics”? Sociologists of the theatre must take into account, in some way, the complex issues raised by these and similar questions in order to understand the multiple threads that bind theatre works to their audiences and, through their mutual dependence and interaction, to their societies. Theatre works and their audiences share to a lesser or greater extent the society that they are both in and shape and form. The network of actions implied in this schema makes theatre an institution that, for all its durability, cannot escape changing historically. The transformations undergone by the theatre as a social institution provide clues to its purposes, perceived and real, for this or that collectivity at particular points in its history.

Chekhov's *Three Sisters* and Shakespeare's *Tempest* are too well known to require a synopsis. The staging of each play, on the other hand, does require several comments. The *mise en scène* of *Three Sisters* emphasizes the life-like, sociopsychological truthfulness of the characters and their dilemmas. Consequently, the actors pay attention to detail, to what might be called the outward expression of their characters' motives. Attention is paid to the interaction between characters. The performers take care to create what Wherrett, in an interview I conducted with him, calls “the appearance of being real”. His intention is repeated in the stage design, costumes and props. All visual effects capture the play's historical period, the seasons marking the passage of time, and the time zones separating morning and evening, and day and night. Time is central to the production for it underpins the transitions undergone by the characters. The lighting design is of special importance in that, translucent or opaque, light accentuates the temporal context of events. This, too, makes concrete Wherrett's intention of conveying clearly and simply the themes of time, displacement and passivity which he discerns in the text and to which he wants to be faithful.

The Tempest, by contrast, is a symbolic and suggestive production. The actors are barefooted and sit, slide, crawl or glide on the floor, their positions and movements generating considerable visual impact. Moods, whether mysterious, magical, foreboding or humorous, blend into each other. Sensory perception is heightened through such arresting images as the earth-covered stage, the metal and stick bric-à-brac lining one of the

stage walls, and floor lights that flash on or off, sometimes in unison with sound effects that conjure up a storm, or Prospero's incantations, Caliban's entrances and Ariel's exits. In the opening scene, a toy ship tossed upon black oilskins figuratively represents the storm and shipwreck that bring Prospero and Miranda to Caliban's island. The lights, earth and bric-à-brac are concrete images for place and narrative sequence, Prospero's discourses on nature and art, Prospero's construction of Caliban as a "natural" savage to be tamed though not civilized, and so on. Ariel weaves in and out of various spaces, from spaces she commands on the stage to several spots she makes her own in the audience. The fact that the part is played by a woman accentuates the master-slave relationship between Prospero and Ariel, and, in another vein again, between Prospero and Caliban. Caliban's enforced obedience to his master is symbolized by the long rope which is tied around his neck and drags along the earthen floor. For people who are familiar with the work of Peter Brook and Patrice Chéreau, the production is like a compilation of citations from these masters, or a homage by citation to them. For instance, no one who has seen Chéreau's *Peer Gynt* can fail to recall that production's extraordinary storm scenes in which a miniature ship is thrown up by a huge black cloth stretched across the entire stage and simulating waves that rock, toss and roll a real ship trying to battle against them. The rather unconstrained and unconventional - for Australia - presentation of *The Tempest* both from a performance and design point of view stimulated a number of spectators to comment on the "exciting", "unusual", "daring", "alternative" style of production that they associated with Belvoir Street Theatre.

Now for a few words on the subject matter of *Love and Magic in Mamma's Kitchen*, which does require a brief introduction. The play is the story of women during the fascist and war period, and particularly of Leonarda who, from southern Italy, is moulded by her region's religiosity and superstition. Leonarda's thirteenth and only surviving child is at the war. In order to save him, she placates the evil spirits that she believes have cursed her by killing three close friends, dismembering their bodies and turning them into soap. Wertmuller bases this bizarre fiction on equally bizarre fact. The real Leonarda went on trial in Italy where she shocked the national consciousness and died in 1945. The production, for its part, foregrounds Leonarda's cultural icons - a mixture of phantoms, witches and madonnas, and spells and prayers. These icons authenticate Leonarda and her friends' cultural world and, at the same time, make it alien, distant, "other", much as Wertmuller does in her films on southern immigrants going to the north of Italy. The production works in with the

filmic quality of the script and, as occurs in Wertmuller, highlights what can be rendered in a comic-grotesque fashion. Crea's principles of short, sharp narration and splicing and montage, besides recalling Wertmuller herself, conjure up the memory of Brecht.

The third type of theatre of interest here is the Melbourne Workers Theatre. This theatre is probably a unique genre, at least in Australia, in that it was formed in 1987 "in response to the growing attacks on trade unions and their members". These words come from the company's policy documents. The MWT is a professional theatre ensemble in residence at the Jolimont Train Maintenance Depot which is in the centre of the city. It is not only workplace-based but is also worker-controlled insofar as the union support group, which advises the company's management committee, consists of union organizers, shop stewards and rank and file union members. The union support group, the management committee and the artistic advisory group, which develops theatrical projects, cooperate and work together. Their principal aim, as formulated in their 1991 statement, is "to make theatre for, with and about working-class people in a way that reveals the complexities and contradictions of current working-class struggles to improve living conditions". There can be no doubt, following this formulation, about the MWT's interventionist purposes on the social, pedagogical and political planes.

Every production mounted by the company is usually first performed during the lunch break at the Jolimont canteen. It is then toured to other workplaces, generally, though not exclusively, for lunchtime performances which last for 25 minutes during the 30 minutes assigned for lunch. Sometimes the break is extended through agreements with employers and unions, allowing 50 minutes of performance time. What all this means is that there are essentially two versions of the same production, the longer version adapted to fit the predicted constraints. Evening performances take place in community halls and, when possible, in prisons. They usually give the long version. Community-hall performances are the company's public performances, that is, they are not confined to people actually working on the job, whether in railway yards, factories, building sites, and so on. The fact that productions, besides being oriented to workers in general, address workers of selected immigrant communities indicates how the MWT strives to reach the non-Anglo/Celtic groups that are integral to the Australian working class in toto. By doing so, the company shows that it properly includes in its horizons members of diverse ethnic communities: it is not, in other words, ethnocentric, which in Australia's history has entailed Anglo-centricity to the exclusion of all "wogs", alias non-Anglo/Celts. The MWT's principle of inclusion by ethnicity means that

members of a given ethnic community, who are not always necessarily railway, industrial or white-collar workers, are not necessarily doomed to the status of outsiders because they are linguistically and culturally disadvantaged. Disadvantage through language and culture is determined by their being non-Anglo/Celtic immigrants per se.

This state of marginalization in respect of the dominant culture, which is mediated through English, especially affects relatively recent immigrants such as the Turks, the Vietnamese, the Chinese and various Arabic-speaking groups. Most of them are politically and/or religiously vulnerable, as is the case of the Turks, among whom - to complicate matters from an ethnic-political point of view - are a significant number of Kurds. If the so-called Turkish community in its entirety is somewhat alienated vis-à-vis the majority culture, the Kurds are doubly alienated. They are an ethnic minority in respect of Turks (this situation originating in Turkey) and are a minority in respect of Anglo/Celts in the host country. What is, then, a source problem for Kurds is compounded by the conditions of the target society to which they emigrate.

These are among the considerations that prompted the MWT to turn its attention in 1991 to the Turkish community. And, in order to understand the community better as well as communicate more effectively with it, the company hired a Turkish liaison officer to be part of its artistic advisory group. The result of the MWT's collective work was *No Fear*, a production whose protagonists are Turkish workers. The script devised for the performance was inspired by events that began to occur in the Ford car plant in Melbourne shortly before the company started its research. Ford's management was attempting to bring in a trade-off for wage rises by introducing a process called "rebalancing". This "rebalancing" essentially amounted to demanding that workers speed up production, thus changing their current ways of working and giving them a greater workload than before. A Turkish shop steward who claimed that he had tried out the new production method and had concluded it was impossible to use was sacked, according to the company for refusing to work. After the shop steward was sacked, some 200 workers on his shift stopped work. The shop steward went on a hunger strike to protest against the company's treatment of him. The Vehicle Builders' Union, in the meantime, had accepted the decision of management and expected the rank and file to rally round. Most of the 200 workers who had originally gone out in support of their shop steward went back to work, leaving about 20 who refused to resume work in the current circumstances. They were subsequently sacked. The shop steward continued his hunger strike for a month. He was joined towards the end of his campaign by two or three

more hunger strikers. None of them was reinstated. The real-life events provoked enormous debate on whether individuals, especially those who were also union members, were empowered to act against union resolutions. The debate was all the more inflammatory because the workers who had gone on the hunger strike had opened up the issue of what a unionist's position should be with regard to individual extreme actions.

The incident takes on a new dimension in *No Fear*. Instead of going on a hunger strike, two Turkish workers, a man and a woman, occupy the factory manager's office. Their action is not premeditated. It happens spontaneously after they are sacked for refusing to trial a new speed line. The turn of events sparks off a heated discussion between them as to the significance of what they have done. The argument is subsequently developed from a different angle by the union organizer, a woman, with whom they had been debating while she was locked outside the office and whom, after much persuasion, they let in. The performance concludes with their capitulation to the union's demands without, however, leaving the impression that their show of force was totally useless. The fact that their fellow workers go out on strike against the new speed line, thereby showing their solidarity with them, suggests that collective action negotiated through unions (and with their backing) in the interests of workers is possible, and desirable.

The production goes at a quick pace. Turkish actors play the workers. An Anglo/Celtic woman plays the union representative. Gestures and movements are open, lively. Props are at a minimum. Black, metal, wire-mesh boxes serve as tables, chairs and podia. A venetian blind is hung upon a black metal frame at door height, suggesting an office window. This minimalist set is consistent with the pared-down, streamlined plot and dialogue which depend, for their punch, on the direct, physically articulate style of play. Music written for the show and songs in Turkish give a "folk" quality to the production. Small segments of the dialogue are delivered in Turkish.

This brief account of *No Fear* will help us place spectators' remarks on what they consider to be the main purposes of the theatre. We have already noted the MWT's expressed purposes. Looking from on stage as well as off it is crucial, since one of my central questions is whether spectators and practitioners conceive of the theatre in a similar way. In posing this question, I keep well in mind the fact that spectators complete my questionnaires after they have seen a particular kind of production. Whatever the production, it probably reflects to a greater or lesser degree

the house style of the company or venue. Or a production may reflect a director's vision or even only her/his habitual way of staging. Thus a particular production may influence how a spectator talks about the purposes of the theatre in general.

These provisos are essential. Nevertheless, my data indicates that spectators' views on the purposes of the theatre as such are not contingent on the production that they have just seen. If influenced by it, their views have been developed, just the same, over time. It seems that how they conceive of the purposes of the theatre is formulated in terms of the *type* of theatre at issue (establishment-mainstream, and so on, as defined above) as well as in relation to their social group, sociocultural values, aspirations, imagination and other factors integral to their existence. What needs to be determined, when these elements are taken into account, is the impact of dominant values on group values; similarly, whether specific types of theatre create values specific to them and - interwoven in the process - also create specific types of audiences whose values are perpetuated by the theatres that they go to. If this is the case, then stage and audiences merely combine to reproduce the values in place. It may be taken as given that different theatre types presuppose and seek out different audiences, those that are thought of as "their" audiences.

The fourth and last type of relevance to this study is bilingual-bicultural theatre, which is here represented by Doppio Teatro's *Tinti di rosso/Red Like the Devil*. Doppio Teatro was founded in Adelaide in 1983 and is still, to my mind, the most important example of a theatre that grows out of a specific ethnic community and aims to return, to that community, the history, cultural particularities, immigrant experiences and present state of affairs which define the community and distinguish it from any other. Since its inception, Doppio has been composed of professional arts workers, each of whose gifts and skills have been absorbed in ensemble creation. The company's emphasis on sharing the whole preparatory process and thus being collectively responsible for the artistic outcome (or "product", as contemporary - and reified - jargon would have it!) goes a long way towards explaining how it became a cohesive unit. This also helps explain how Doppio, although functioning on a shoe-string within the economic as well as ideological confines suffered by all community theatre groups, has succeeded in creating works having the strength, polish and finish normally expected of professional, "high" art and/or mainstream companies. Extremely sophisticated from both a conceptual and artistic point of view, Doppio belied the idea in vogue during the eighties that community theatre was a people's theatre of some sort and, therefore, by

definition could not aspire to "real" art. One of the ideological constraints imposed on community theatre, principally from non-community sources, has to do precisely with this kind of image, an image which, by projecting the notion that community theatre is necessarily amateur and, consequently, necessarily of inferior quality, continues to widen the rift between theatre considered to be art, on the one hand (mainstream), and theatre presumed to be a pastime - or, at best, a social service - on the other (community theatre). These remarks are just as relevant for the Melbourne Workers Theatre which, like Doppio, proved that a people's theatre and art were not a contradiction in terms.

Doppio, though fully professional, is community-based and community-oriented insofar as it turns for material, inspiration, legitimation and audiences to Italian neighbourhoods, clubs and associations which generally group people from this or that particular region in Italy. If Italians and Italo-Australians are intended to be "its" audience, first and foremost, Doppio Teatro nevertheless does not turn down invitations from prestigious organizations like the Adelaide Festival or growing ones like the Canberra Festival. *Red Like the Devil* was performed at the Canberra Festival after having been premiered in Loveday in South Australia, where the play is set, and also in Adelaide earlier in 1991. In other words, Doppio does not cultivate a fringe or unofficial "no frills" brand name. Indeed, its appearances at venues thought to attract well-heeled and/or practised spectators of whatever ethnic group bring in members of the Italian community who would probably not have gone there. How it extends audiences for both community and mainstream theatre, merging the boundaries between them, is a measure of Doppio's public importance and success. And its public role is to be seen, as is also the case with the Melbourne Workers Theatre, in how it provides a great social benefit to the community that it targets in the first instance - this being the "service" dimension of its work. The term "service" refers here to a broad, humanitarian conception of democratic access to the theatre rather than to a purely utilitarian, narrow notion of theatre as something fulfilling some bureaucratic function.

However, unlike the Melbourne Workers Theatre, Doppio makes no special claim on the working-class component of its ethnic constituency. Its primary concern is not with a class perspective which, as the MWT shows, cuts across ethnic boundaries, but rather with what could be called an ethnocentric vision. Its principal aim, then, is to articulate the problems of cultural identity experienced by Italians and Italo-Australians and, in doing so, recover the cultural heritage belonging to them that had been

attenuated and fragmented through the processes of immigration. Since immigration has had, and continues to have, a similar impact on any immigrant group, whatever its ethnicity, Doppio's ethnocentric focus, while homing in on the Italian community, is by no means a factor of exclusion.

Given its line of vision, it is not surprising that Doppio productions are clustered around several themes: the weight of past history on the present; the struggle experienced by the children of immigrants who wish to affirm their social, cultural and psychological independence from their dispossessed parents; the binding strength of traditions, notably of the rural traditions on which the southern Italians who have emigrated to Australia rely, albeit now in an alien environment which, in addition, does not even attempt to accommodate "foreign" values, customs and behaviours; the cultural stagnation that is a consequence of freezing life in the past and in memory; the difficulties of integration, where pressures to conform with the prevailing norms collide with the incomprehension, resistance or rejection felt on both sides, Anglo/Celts urging adaptation and commitment to the "Aussie" way while denying the channels for entry into it, Italians, meanwhile, afraid to let go of the very thing, "identity", that had assured their survival and was still likely to help them survive. The substance of Doppio plays foregrounds issues of immediate concern to Italians and Italo-Australians. But the company also highlights Italian popular culture, particularly from the south, by using the legends, tales, masks and especially music and songs that are intrinsic to it. By doing so, Doppio demonstrates the beauty of that culture, declares its validity for the arts in Australia, and challenges the negative conceptions and prejudices regarding southern Italians that abound among Anglo/Celts and are current among northern Europeans who have settled in Australia, a small group of northern Italians included in them.

Red Like the Devil draws on all these aspects of Doppio's repertory but concentrates on a little-known facet of the history of Italians in Australia, that is, on their internment during the war when Mussolini's Italy was Britain's enemy and, consequently, also Australia's. Loveday, where the production was first performed, was the site of one of these internment camps. The play tells of Francesco Fantin, an anarchist who was hounded out of Italy by the fascists and who was subsequently put behind barbed wire in Australia along with fascists and communists, all of them deemed indiscriminately to be possible traitors to Australia. Fascists, anarchists and communists are taken by the military authorities running the camp to be one and the same entity, irrespective of the ideological differences irreconcilably separating them. Fantin befriends a communist in the camp

who tries to warn him about the foes within - the fascists - and the foes without - the army officers guarding the camp. Although he is wary about stating his political allegiances, Fantin donates money to buy sheepskins to assist the allies fighting in Russia. This fact is discovered by the interned fascists. Realizing that the mounting tensions between him and them are putting his life at risk, Fantin officially asks the camp captain to transfer him to another camp. The captain refuses. Fantin is assassinated by the leader of the fascists.

The production is made up of short scenes, some being flashbacks to the events in Italy leading up to his exile. A poignant scene shows Fantin as a child discovering his mother hiding an anarchist flag. Another shows his mother urging his flight after news has broken that his anarchist friends have been arrested. Marching soldiers singing *Giovinezza*, a fascist hymn, interrupt this scene. Yet another episode in Fantin's past life shows his relationship with Clara, who questions the heroics of men and speaks of the courage of women. Other songs, both folk and political, break up the dialogue and create different time dimensions, the past converging on the present. The chorus of the Hebrew Slaves from *Nabucco* by Verdi "frames" the argument on freedom running right through the production. Sets are simple. A table, a stool, a peeling knife and then, later, Fantin's pot plant sketch out the curiously quasi-domestic environment the internees make for themselves in the camp. Metal sculptures in the shape of picture frames are hung at the back of the stage, the whole suggesting a barbed-wire wall. These are images of war. Metal parrots on the wall represent the type of craft objects internees made when they were not working. They are also signs of the natural environment in which the unnatural camp was built. Lighting is hot - essentially white and red - to denote, like the birds, the semi-desert landscape where Loveday was located. Besides conveying heat, it captures the feeling of loneliness, isolation and desperation for which the barbed-wire wall presented to the spectators' gaze is an apt metaphor. Fantin's memories of the past are, by contrast, swathed in muted spotlights and shadows.

Who Spectators Are and What They Say

Three Sisters

What, then, do the spectators attending such distinctive productions have to say about the purposes of the theatre? Audiences for *Three Sisters* overwhelmingly agree that the theatre's main objective is to entertain people. The words "entertain" and "entertainment" appear 402 times in 551 completed questionnaires. This 551 represents 2% of the total number of viewers for a six-week season. The hierarchy of key words gives us, at 155 times, "education" and its collocations (thus "instruction", "enlightenment", "information", "teaching" and "learning"). The next in line is "stimulation" (56 times) followed by statements on the theatre's purpose of presenting/teaching values, ideas and issues (48 times). The view that the theatre seeks to give pleasure or touch the emotions is not held widely (39 and 15 times respectively). Nor is the idea that it should "interpret life in its many aspects", here quoting a Greek-Jewish Australian. References to "life" or "people's lives" appear 37 times. The notion that the theatre has a cultural purpose appears rarely.

The references to culture that do appear may be summarized pretty well exhaustively by the following: "to tell me what is going on in other cultures, either today or several centuries ago and to make me more *Kultural!*" (Anglo/Celtic female librarian); "to educate on diverse cultures" (Anglo/Celtic travel consultant who is a woman); "to widen one's horizon culturally" (retired Anglo/Celtic woman); "the theatre is a way to teach culture" (retired Hungarian-Australian woman). Now and then a respondent will note "cultural values", "cultural exchange", "development of culture" (Greek-Australian male manager) or simply say "culture" or string it with "relaxation, leisure" (Franco-Australian male student).

It seems that STC spectators place entertainment above all other purposes even when they combine "entertainment" with other terms, thereby indicating that, in their view, entertainment is not the *sole* purpose of the theatre. Nor is the primacy of entertainment in any way weakened by the following kinds of observations of which, comparatively speaking, there are few: the theatre's purpose is "to stretch the boundaries of our thinking and imagination" (Austrian-Australian), "express new movements in the arts" (Anglo/Celtic-Australian) or "exist for playwrights, actors, directors, etc., to indulge their favourite passion" (also Anglo/Celtic). References like these to the artistic endeavour that the theatre indubitably

is occasionally include the compositional elements of stage work. Take, for example, "I enjoy the artistic creation of sets and costumes" (from a clerk in her sixties who notes in her preceding phrase that the purpose of theatre is "to be entertaining"). Or else we have this: [the purpose of the theatre is] "to entertain and to create an illusion of a kind of magic through the spoken or sung word, stage setting and lighting" (a woman in her fifties involved in marketing).

The majority of *Three Sisters* respondents are between the ages of 21 and 50. Most are university educated and are in the upper occupational categories, namely, managers and administrators, and professionals (teachers, doctors, lawyers, and similar liberal professions). Most of them (78%) are from an English-speaking background. Those who are not nevertheless belong to the same social stratum by virtue of their education and occupation. We could probably say, on the basis of this data, that the STC is a mainstream theatre precisely because it plays to comparatively well-educated and well-off audiences, in short, to an established rather than, say, a social-climbing, "new money" middle class. An additional characteristic that helps to define it as mainstream theatre is the orthodox taste of its audiences. This orthodoxy penetrates their discussion of *Three Sisters* as well as their remarks on what they like about STC productions in general and what they would like the company to stage in the future.

The Tempest

Turning now to *The Tempest* where there are 364 respondents who represent, as occurred with *Three Sisters*, 2% of the total number of viewers. This audience also essentially belongs to the upper echelons, give or take some minor discrepancies. There are, for example, more professional people at *The Tempest* and fewer managers and administrators. (Compare 52% professionals and 7.6% managers at *The Tempest* with 47% and 13.2% for the same categories at *Three Sisters*.) There are also more students and fewer clerks at *The Tempest* (16.4% and 5.4% compared with 7.9% and 7.8% at *Three Sisters*). The comparatively strong presence of students under twenty at this production possibly has to do with the fact that *The Tempest* was set that year for the Higher School Certificate. Those not at high school are studying at a university. The great majority of the audience already holds a university degree. Thus, going by their occupational profile combined with their educational one, the spectators answering questionnaires for *The Tempest* could be

described as the intelligentsia of the social elite that goes both to Belvoir Street Theatre and the STC. It is probably no coincidence that the theatre cited most by *Tempest* spectators as the one they last attended before coming to see this production is the STC - and the answer was given before the *Three Sisters* season had opened. STC respondents, for their part, cite Belvoir Street Theatre most frequently. Moreover, the intelligentsia of the social elite at Belvoir Street is predominantly Anglo/Celtic (85%). Australians from non-English-speaking backgrounds along with those who do not claim to be Australian in any shape or form (they describe themselves as straight "Dutch", "German", and so on) constitute 13% of the respondents (2% give no answer). At *Three Sisters*, 19% is of non-English-speaking background.

Now, a glance at the key words shows that, once again, "entertainment" tops the list (233 mentions). What is significantly different, however, is that proportionally fewer spectators place "entertainment" first on their list than is the case for *Three Sisters*. And from here stem many more differences. To start with, the notion that entertainment is the main purpose of the theatre is couched in terms that qualify and perhaps even weaken the importance of the notion itself. Take, for instance, this statement by an Anglo/Celtic childcare worker in her twenties: "entertainment firstly, involving issues (current or otherwise)". Or this from a university-educated woman in her thirties who describes her occupation as "mother": "Theatre should stimulate - either aesthetically or intellectually, entertainingly or emotionally". Or take again: "I go primarily for a good night's entertainment, but I also think theatre is a perfect vehicle for bringing social issues to the fore" (analyst-programmer in his fifties). Or again: "To entertain - sometimes to educate - something to lose myself in. Fact, fiction or fantasy" (Anglo/Celtic manager in her forties). These examples are fairly typical of the more elastic and also more articulate train of thought as well as of expression of *Tempest* spectators when compared with those at *Three Sisters*.

The next most striking difference is the arrangement of the key words when they are mapped out according to numerical frequency. *Tempest* spectators strongly believe that the theatre's purpose is to make people aware of social issues. References to this idea and to variants of it are noted 124 times. As we have seen, the idea was voiced relatively infrequently by *Three Sisters* spectators. Which factor helps to distinguish the upper-stratum audience at *The Tempest* from its homologue at *Three Sisters*: the first is more socially oriented and possibly has a more developed social consciousness than the second. Even so, although

Tempest spectators advocate the theatre's *engagement* or social commitment, they do not support didactic theatre. The terms "educate", "enlighten" and "inform", when clustered, are low on the list (39 appearances). So are the opinions that the theatre should "provoke thought" (32 times) or "stimulate the intellect" (8 times). Third in the order of priorities after "entertainment" and "social issues" is the idea that the theatre aims to create an artistic experience for its audiences and give them pleasure. Only 5 spectators refer to how the theatre broadens people's cultural horizons or is part of a culture and, therefore, gives insight into it.

There does not appear to be a pattern of response according to ethnicity. Spectators of non-English-speaking backgrounds reply very much like the Anglo/Celts do. Let us look briefly at the high school and university students, since they form a relatively important group and can be isolated relatively easily for special attention. On the whole, they cover much the same range of ideas and in much the same order of priority as respondents who are older than them. Taking the high school students first. Anglo/Celtic high schoolers do not, as a general rule, elaborate on their thoughts. For this reason the following reply from one of them stands out from the ordinary. She writes: "entertainment, to be aware of social issues and see some real talent and famous plays brought to life by modern actors". And her statements on plays and actors put her in the group of remarks I have noted above which attribute some artistic purpose to the theatre. High schoolers of non-English-speaking background, while generally going into the same areas covered by most spectators - again as I have noted them above - nevertheless differ in how willingly they elaborate upon their ideas (not a feature, as I have already said, of their Anglo/Celtic counterparts). And it is their development of themes that recur across the board that enriches these themes. Take, for example, this from a Swiss-Australian: "I think its purpose is to entertain while making someone aware of social issues. The entertainment value is necessary, I think, to attract the audience". Or again, let us take this from a Polish-Australian high school student: [the purpose of theatre is] "mainly to entertain, but as I see different types of plays etc., I think that they're becoming a main way of communication and education about social issues: they're also bringing different social groups together (i.e. different age groups, etc.)".

University students, whatever their background, tend to echo their juniors in the kind of development of ideas they provide. However, the following reply from a Yugoslav-Australian is quite distinctive. After

having alluded to entertainment and social issues, he continues that the purposes of the theatre are to “try to promote Australian culture, initiate and inspire new works from local writers and directors, especially from minorities, e.g. aborigines, migrants, etc”.

When we leave the student body and look at the rest of the respondents across all the ethnic groups, we see a fairly consistent pattern of replies. This from a Sri-Lankan university-educated male may be said to cover many of the ideas expressed by *Tempest* spectators as a whole. He states: [the purposes of the theatre are] “educate, stimulate, entertain, raise awareness, challenge, provoke, criticize”. A few spectators across the ethnic groups note that the theatre ought to deal with political issues or transmit a political message. But this interest in politics appears almost as rarely as allusions to culture. If anything may be said to distinguish respondents from non-English-speaking backgrounds, it is their referring less than Anglo/Celts to the idea that the theatre sets out to deal with social issues, past or present. A Lebanese-Australian teacher in her fifties states plainly that “plays which focus mainly on social issues often BORE me because the message tends to be negative”. An Italian academic could not be more eloquent when he states that the purpose of the theatre is “to be a theatre, i.e. a space where actors perform. All other purposes are welcome and useful and meritorious but are complementary”.

Love and Magic in Mamma’s Kitchen

A similar observation on how spectators’ viewpoints tend to converge on much the same ground irrespective of their ethnic grouping can be made of audiences for *Love and Magic*. Variations offered by non-Anglo/Celts modify the main points made by respondents taken as a whole, Anglo/Celts setting the tone of the replies. But these variations stay within the boundaries set by the majority. What this suggests is that ethnicity or cultural identity as such does not determine spectators’ views. As far as this particular sample goes, at least, it would seem that social status - social class, stratum, seam, or what you will - is the dominant factor in shaping what may be called common opinion. And the results for this particular sample, as we shall see, correspond with those for *Three Sisters* and *The Tempest*.

Let us look at *Love and Magic* spectators in order to substantiate these points. We are here dealing with 353 respondents who represent 7% of the total number of viewers over four weeks. The majority (74%) is of

English-speaking background, 65% of them being Anglo/Celtic Australians. Of the remaining 26% composed of non-Anglo/Celts (the percentage significantly higher than for *The Tempest's* 13%), 10% are Italian or Italo-Australian. The high proportion here of them relative to *The Tempest* (where they are virtually non-existent) must surely be linked to the fact that the production is directed and performed by Italo-Australians, and, moreover, in the legitimating context of Carnivalé. A number of questions arise. Does this mean, for instance, that people of Italian background, Greek background, and so on, who live, and many of whom were born, in Australia are not familiar with Shakespeare? Do they consider him to be foreign, not part of their own culture? And this irrespective of their introduction to Shakespeare in high school? Or does the fact that most casts in most theatres have Anglo/Celtic names suggest to them that the theatre is primarily a matter of Anglo culture and, consequently, for people of English-speaking background? Are they, then, alienated from the theatre? And if alienation is at issue, to what extent is it related to what might be called the ideology of the theatre in Australia, namely, its recourse to conventional Anglo models of performance (which, of course, have long been abandoned by such innovative British companies as Cheek by Jowl and the Théâtre de Complicité)? In addition, to what extent does such an ideology of the theatre anticipate audiences commensurate with these models, thereafter reproducing audiences who are not only especially responsive to them but also expect the models to which they have become accustomed? The question of expectation, as I have just formulated it, leads to the issue of how expectation (or user-demand, or consumer-demand - take your pick of contemporary computer/commercial jargons!) feeds into a vicious circle in which all parties involved in making the theatre a veritable social institution are merely mirror reflections of each other. If it is true that people get the governments they deserve, do they get the theatres they deserve?

All these questions are directly tied to the study of sociostructures and cultural values and viewpoints undertaken by my research as a whole. Whatever, in the final analysis, are the answers to them, the point to notice here is that more than half of the respondents from non-English-speaking backgrounds are in the liberal professions. Half of the Italians and Italo-Australians, when isolated for the purposes of closer investigation, also prove to be professional people. The next largest groups are clerks and students. The breakdown of occupations for Anglo/Celts follows this pattern. The data on social stratification indicates, once again, a relatively homogeneous group cutting across ethnic categories. In other words, no

one ethnic group is distinguished by its different class status.

The fact that the occasion is Carnivalé, which is presented as being a people's event, does not change the class picture emerging from the data. There are two respondents from an Italian background who belong to the category of "salespersons and personal service workers" as defined by the Australian Bureau of Statistics. The same, or close on the same, number of people from other backgrounds, Anglo/Celtic included, appear under this particular occupational classification. There are no people of non-Anglo/Celtic background, Italian or otherwise, who fall into the blue-collar categories of "plant and machine operators, and drivers" and "labourers and related workers" devised by the ABS. Which suggests that, although *Love and Magic* was billed under Carnivalé, the supposedly "ethnic" event par excellence, it did not bring out and embrace - or Carnivalé at Belvoir Street Theatre did not do so - the disadvantaged groups *within* the ethnic minorities integral to multicultural Australia. Furthermore, the only people who figure under the two lowest occupational categories of the ABS are people of English-speaking background. There is a grand total of 4 of them out of 262 respondents who are Anglo/Celtic-Australians (229 of them) or come out of another English-speaking background (for example, English, Canadian, New Zealander)! The data unfortunately suggests that the people's festival of Carnivalé in a mainstream theatre, even in a radical-mainstream one, is not for the people.

What is the picture regarding the purposes of the theatre as drawn collectively by our respondents? Not surprisingly - since this also happened in the case of *The Tempest* - the range of observations was wide and required coherent assembly. Once again (perhaps now predictably!) "entertainment" comes out on top (cited 204 times). It is followed by "educate/enlighten/inform" (82 times) which, as you can see from my slashes, I have grouped together for the sake of coherence and manageability (otherwise we would all be lost in a sea of details). This bunch is followed by remarks on how the theatre should provoke thought (65 times), stimulate (36 times), and comment on society, deal with social issues and conditions, and show social change (33 times for the last three put together on society). Then comes the idea that theatre aims to be artistic and creative (31 references). The idea that the theatre wishes to enrich people culturally, celebrate cultural difference or provide a "cultural outlet" (though the respondent quoted does not say for whom) figures 10 times. Minuscule though the association between theatre and culture may be, it certainly compares favourably with *The Tempest* where, for a larger sample, there are a mere 5 allusions to culture.

As happened for the preceding two productions, *Love and Magic* spectators link references to entertainment with other purposes that they assign to the theatre. More often than not, the linkage is with “education” or a variant thereof. The process of linking shows that spectators attribute multiple purposes to the theatre. In addition, it shows how they refine crude terms or terms that are open to crude interpretation. The following words from an Anglo/Celtic university student in her thirties are an excellent example of the two points I am making on the linking process. She says: [the purpose of the theatre is] “entertainment primarily; social challenge/education/thought provoking secondarily (maybe this is what I find entertaining)”. Our spectator’s parenthesis is worth noticing because, in it, she attempts to understand what she means by “entertainment”. Furthermore, her reflections modify the notion of “pure” entertainment or show-biz which has been touted for so long and so noisily by so-called commercial theatre.

Can any conclusion be drawn from the fact that “entertainment” comes swiftly to spectators’ minds? Its very frequency may point to the notion’s ubiquitous presence in society at large. Thus, whatever its origins, the notion has become hegemonous; consequently, the ideal of being entertained appears to have become part and parcel of general social expectations. The thoughts of an Anglo/Celtic translator are illuminating in this regard. She writes: “I don’t think there is a single “main purpose” of theatre. One normally expects theatre to entertain above all else, but it often raises social and/or moral issues and provokes strong emotional feelings. What dominates depends on the play being performed. I did not find *Love and Magic* an entertaining play, but I did find it sad, tragic, and very thought-provoking”. This spectator is, of course, absolutely right about the changes of emphasis according to the play “being performed”. And what is striking in a mass of data where, without any shadow of a doubt, references to entertainment predominate is that this spectator announces a principle that she holds to be true for her society (“One normally expects”).

It is clear that I have begun to construct a “dialogue” between spectators. It could well include the voice of an Italian teacher who states: “I don’t know, never thought about it. I go to the theatre possibly for any of these reasons: (a) to be entertained (b) because I know a text and like it (c) to be exposed to a different reality, perspective, frame of reference from mine; to get a new insight”. Is it significant, in the context of a discussion about hegemonic expectations, that a spectator who “never thought about” the purposes of the theatre should then proceed to think about

entertainment, writing it down first? It may not necessarily be first in her own hierarchy of values. We cannot know from her formulation whether she gives "any of these reasons" priority. But it may be possible to say that she echoes a dominant sentiment precisely because it is so widespread as to appear self-evident and, as it were, be of second nature.

Clearly, detailed responses like the ones quoted above (and they are representative samples) cannot be transposed easily into a numerically hierarchical word order of the kind I have established. The nuances and even richness of perception and conception are lost. Nevertheless, schemata are a reasonable guide to spectators' views concerning the role of the theatre in society. Schemata are not adequate - at least not in hierarchical table form - when it comes to organizing material on spectators' interaction with productions. Here a different kind of methodology is required.

No Fear

With these reflections in mind, though not in the foreground for the immediate task at hand, let us look at the survey of *No Fear*. The first question to ask in the light of the preceding information is whether notions of entertainment predominate in the accounts of spectators for this production. Let us remember that the production was geared specifically to members of the working class, whether blue- or white-collar workers. As we have seen, white-collar workers are a very small part indeed of the audiences discussed up until now. Blue collars, for their part, are as good as non-existent: a paltry 2 out of 551 at *Three Sisters*; 2 out of 364 at *The Tempest*; 4 out of 353 at *Love and Magic*. Audiences for *No Fear* do, indeed, turn out to have a significantly different social base from those at the establishment-mainstream and radical-mainstream theatres at issue.

There are 224 respondents for *No Fear*. A cursory glance at the demographic data (which, to date, is tentative) shows that unskilled as well as skilled workers (the latter including plant and machine operators, and drivers) well and truly outnumber any other occupational category. They constitute 28% of the total 224 respondents. Tradespeople or those who have an ambiguous status in that they have trades skills but are not self-employed (for example, those who give their job description as "electrician") and may well be employed as workers by the railway or in car plants, for example, constitute 25% of the total. My guess is that some of the people who generally correspond to the ABS descriptions for its

occupational classification of “tradespersons” belong, strictly speaking, to the category of skilled workers. If this is the case, the percentage noted above for the combined group of skilled and unskilled workers should be higher. Until such time as I am able to resolve this ambiguity, the figures will have to stay as being tentatively devised. Among the remaining categories figure 15% of professionals (for example, union leaders, project officers, writers, and arts workers, the latter including government bureaucrats involved in arts grants, and the like). There is also a fairly significant group of nurses. Prison inmates, who form part of the sample, frequently sabotaged the question on their employment, replying that they were car thieves, bank robbers, drug dealers, and the like, which descriptions could well explain why they were in jail. (They could also well fit, by the way, their regular employment, but are not listed as such in the occupational categories of the Australian Bureau of Statistics!) When replies were straight, prison inmates usually had a trade (for instance, plasterer or motor mechanic) or held down menial jobs (kitchen hand, car cleaner).

Now, when this rather heterogeneous audience is taken as a whole, “entertainment” surprisingly does *not* top the charts by a long shot, as occurs in our previous samples. In fact, it is marginally *behind* the grouping composed of the terms “educate”, “enlighten”, “learn”, “understand” and “inform”. Next in line is the idea that theatre “strives to get the message across”, an idea well and truly in favour among the nurses in the sample. This might be termed the militantly didactic view of the theatre. Then comes the notion that the theatre seeks to express “thought” or “points of view” or “the contradictions between workers and bosses”. Towards the bottom of the list are to be found references to culture (and notably to the opinion that theatre should present other cultures and foster interest in them); to society and social awareness; to the working class as such. Those speaking of the working class state quite firmly that the theatre should help it and should show the struggles and problems of this class. Also in the lower rungs of opinion are reflections on audiences. Here respondents note that the theatre aims to empower, stimulate or involve audiences. Right at the bottom are references to emotions and to the theatre’s purpose of telling stories. Emotions fare poorly in all the cases covered by my survey. Story-telling is cited only by spectators at *No Fear* and *Love and Magic*, where it is also at the bottom of the list.

Are there any significant trends marking out any of the groups composing audiences for *No Fear*? Do the Turks and Turkish-Australians, who were targeted specifically by the production, assign purposes to the

theatre in culturally-specific ways? Is there, in other words, a discernible cultural influence on their views? The second question, in particular, is extremely difficult and cannot be answered adequately from the limited information available. Still, let us see what indications the data does give us.

Putting it briefly. When the data is examined from the standpoint of occupational categories, it is clear that railway and other blue-collar workers believe as strongly as people classified as professionals that the theatre seeks to deal with "real-life drama", "people's experiences" and "other people's ideas on different issues". "Entertain" and "educate" (along with affiliated terms) appear in both these groups, "entertain" usually preceding the latter. (Thus we might have "entertain and educate". The word order in this sort of coupling does not contradict the fact noted above that, all told, "entertain" is not the term most frequently cited.) Since the few references made to culture are usually made by the (usually) university-educated professionals, an exception to the rule is all the more noticeable. The exception is a moulder working on the railways who states that the purpose of the theatre is "to teach culture". A few references are explicitly made to the unions whose responsibilities, among other related topics, are, after all, the subject matter of the script written for the production. The references come from blue-collar workers. Thus we have this fitter's assistant: "to show the people that everyone should support each other and the unions, and vice versa".

When, on the other hand, the data is viewed from the perspective of ethnic categories, two main groups of remarks have to be made. The first pertains to non-Anglo/Celts in general, who tend to put entertainment in second place in their order of thoughts. Some simply do not mention entertainment at all. The second bloc of remarks concerns the Turkish community in particular. The large majority of respondents from this community are skilled blue-collar workers. A significant group among them is composed of high school students. All attended the public performances that are always given by the MWT. When it comes to seeing how Turks and Turkish-Australians express their views on the purposes of the theatre, they *invariably* stress education, putting it well and truly at the top of their priorities for the theatre. Furthermore, they very rarely refer to entertainment at all, not even as a last possibility. (Anglo/Celts, we have noted, tend to place it second.) The rare mentions of entertainment among respondents of Turkish background come from the high school students among them. The particularity I am noting means that the lexical combinations of Turks and Turkish-Australians take on a very specific character. Time and again these respondents explain that the theatre should

“provide people with political and cultural knowledge”, “provide messages” or “communicate clear messages”, “help the working class with social and cultural issues”, or “take up the issues and problems of the people and educate them”.

The political underpinnings of the last cluster of observations, which are very typical of the Turkish and Turkish-Australian respondents, emerge fully into the open in other commentaries. Two examples of what may be called political advocacy and highly developed political consciousness will serve to illustrate the point. An electrical welder states that the theatre's purpose is “to form a relationship with the masses; to question and take up their problems; to make them think”. A man who simply describes himself as a worker states: “to unite people; to demonstrate the oppression of the people; to show social reality to the oppressed people”. All these observations were written in Turkish, which may suggest that these respondents are still uncomfortable about using English - or will use it only when absolutely necessary.

So let us return to the question posed earlier regarding culturally-specific views. Is it possible to say anything relatively conclusive about the social roles attributed to the theatre by people of Turkish background? Do they have a culturally different perspective - different, that is to say, from views expressed by others included in the data for *No Fear*? One thing is clear. No other group vocalizes, so consistently and so strongly, such an unmistakably political - and politicized - viewpoint. It may well have satisfied Brecht, Piscator, Mayakovsky, Tretiakov and similar practitioners of the theatre involved in the great political struggles of the first half of the twentieth century and in which they sought to involve theatre audiences. Once the political dimension of the Turkish respondents, male and female, has been noted (women are by no means politically weaker in their outlook), we still have to come to terms with the question of whether this political dimension is actually a *cultural* trait. Or should we primarily explain the political militancy evident here in terms of the *kind* of immigrants they are? Most of them emigrated for economic reasons. A good number of them are also political refugees. Are they, therefore, primarily distinguished by their sociopolitical experiences, world view and status, their being Turkish rather than, say, Lebanese being of secondary importance? If our answer is in the affirmative, then the notion of ethnicity, of cultural identity per se, must take second place. Or should we, on the other hand, enrich the concept of ethnicity and not define it as a matter of cultural identity pure and simple, but as a matter in which culture is inseparable from politics? In this case, culture would be an all-

embracing phenomenon, the political particularities of a given society being integral to its culture. I opt for the second alternative. However, whatever the most appropriate frame of reference regarding “culture” turns out to be, there can be no doubt as to the profound difference between the Turkish minority and the Anglo/Celtic majority culture in respect of the purposes of the theatre.

Red Like the Devil

It is now time to turn to the results of the survey on bilingual-bicultural theatre, the fourth and last type of theatre involved in this study and which is here represented by Doppio Teatro’s *Tinti di rosso/Red Like the Devil*. As is clear from my earlier remarks on the company and this production, the broad category of bilingual-bicultural theatre is here illustrated by *Italo-Australian* theatre. It must be remembered that, unlike the Melbourne Workers Theatre, Doppio Teatro does not focus on the working class as such, nor, therefore, on the working-class constituency of the Italian community. I am, of course, including under the general heading of “Italian community” those who describe themselves as Italo-Australian, this description serving the people who have taken out Australian citizenship or whose children were born in Australia.

The survey covers 219 spectators over four performances, which gives us 25% of the total number of viewers of the production. Since we are dealing with a company that aims primarily, though certainly not exclusively, to reach the Italian community, however it is broken down analytically in terms of social class, the ethnic composition of our respondents will be of particular interest to us. Anglo/Celtic-Australians are once again in the majority at 59%. People from other English-speaking backgrounds (New Zealander, English, Canadian, American) form a group at 8%. Australians of non-Anglo/Celtic origins constitute 26% of the total. People belonging to non-English-speaking backgrounds but who do not describe themselves as X-Australian (e.g., Chinese-Australian) make up 5%. The remaining percentage gives no answer. Those whose background is Italian, whether they define themselves as Italo-Australian or Italian (and three Italians show up in the group marked “non-English-speaking background”), constitute 18% of the total number of respondents. This is a much higher percentage than appears for *Love and Magic*, especially when taken in proportion to the total number of respondents for each survey. (Compare 219 respondents for *Red Like the Devil* with 353 for

Love and Magic of whom only 10% are of Italian background.) Given the general pattern emerging from all the data examined up till now, it is not surprising to discover that, once again, “entertainment” comes out on top of the word list. It is cited 75 times, followed, in order of importance, by “educate” and its collocations (46 times), then by the view that the theatre “expresses” (or “explores” or “broadens”) ideas (33 times) or “provokes thought” (25 times, variations on the same theme included in the count) and, finally - still in the upper cluster of terms appearing most frequently - by references to how the theatre “communicates”, “brings across” or “conveys” ideas, messages, meanings or a moral (24 times). Once again, feelings and emotions are low on the list, though not as low as in some of our earlier cases (17 mentions). The idea that the theatre is connected to “real life” or mirrors or reflects it is also mentioned 17 times. We then have the view that the theatre’s purpose is to state messages (13 times), present issues (11 times) and provide social comment or raise social awareness (10 times). References to culture appear less frequently than may, perhaps, have been expected at a bilingual-bicultural event. They occur 10 times and usually allude to how the theatre disseminates or helps create an understanding of different cultures.

Our sample also gives us spectators who are aware of the relationship of actors to audience or of how the theatre aims to “stretch” audiences (8 references to audiences). Once again, as in most cases before this one, references to creativity and art are few and far between (6 times), as are those to actors and artists (also 6 times). We also find a few references to the idea that the theatre’s purpose is to show aspects of “the Italian way of life”. The spectators who attribute this specific purpose to the theatre either take the question asked of them to refer directly to *Red Like the Devil* (which means that they have misinterpreted the question) or are influenced in the answer they give by this particular production. Story-telling also appears at the bottom of the list, as happened, as we have already seen, for *No Fear* and *Love and Magic*.

All told, then, the respondents for *Red Like the Devil* could be described as being fairly earnest insofar as they place a good deal of value on education, information, instruction, ideas, thought, messages and meanings, all of which terms indicate that they have a cognitive approach to the theatre or see it as a place where statements appealing to their reason are made, generally for their edification. In this respect they are rather like respondents for *The Tempest*, although, as we have also seen, most of the audiences covered by my survey, with the exception of those for *Three Sisters*, tend to stress the educative dimension of the theatre, whether of

the fairly “straight” kind, as was the case for *Tempest* spectators (emphasis on learning as such), or of the more militant and more politically oriented kind, as was the case for *No Fear* and particularly for the Turkish respondents in the audience, whatever their gender or age. Furthermore, although respondents for *Red Like the Devil* put entertainment at the top of their list, as occurs everywhere *but* at *No Fear*, the number of times that this term and its off-shoot “entertain” appear in proportion to the total number of respondents is lower than in other cases, except for *No Fear*, where, as we already know, “entertainment” scores second. Viewed from this angle, that is, in terms of proportion, spectators at *Red Like the Devil* give a mitigated first vote to entertainment. Take, for example, the difference implied by a count of 75 for entertainment for 219 respondents for *Red Like the Devil* as distinct from a count of 204 out of 353 respondents for *Love and Magic*. Thus, although numerical measurement is no more than an indication of trends, it adequately points out that what I have called a “mitigated first vote” for entertainment in the case of *Red Like the Devil* makes spectators at this production more like those at *No Fear*. We may, then, be able to conclude, on the basis of this particular piece of data, that audiences for workplace-community theatre are more like those for bilingual-bicultural theatre, which is also community-based, than they are for any other type of theatre.

In the light of this tentative conclusion (“tentative” because it is based on one rather than on several supporting pieces of evidence), it is important to isolate the Italian-community component of the whole audience for special attention. What do we see, in fact, in the 18% of respondents who are Italian or Italo-Australian? The first thing to note is that half of this group is made up of high school students. (Since high schoolers are an important part of the sample audience for *Red Like the Devil*, making up 24% of the sample, it may be worth looking at them in some detail shortly.) The remaining half is primarily made up, on the one hand, of arts workers who are theatre directors, television producers and actors, and, on the other, of teachers, clerks and those who fall into the category of “managers and administrators”. The group, then, may be said to fall relatively neatly into a small number of sub-groups, as defined by people’s occupations.

This, of course, simplifies the task of coordinating the responses of the Italo-Australian group. Thus, when the high school students are taken in one bunch, what we find is their tendency to see the theatre as a message-communicating medium. Only one of these students refers to entertainment. The arts workers, on the other hand, tend to give a high

priority to entertainment, linking the latter to the purposes of stimulation, education, "expanding one's horizons" or "pushing the boundaries of people's experiences". One of the television producers in the sample puts together a whole range of purposes, as follows: "to educate, entertain, enlighten, motivate, provoke, excite, question values, to play with language and ideas". By contrast, one of the managers in the sample narrows the issue down to *Red Like the Devil*, and does so deliberately, unlike those referred to above who appear to have misunderstood the question. She states: "This time - how we Italians were treated; to show others we are just like them". High school students figure prominently among those who directly connect the question regarding the purposes of the theatre to the particular example at hand. Thus we find such observations as "show what Italians were going through at that time" or "make people aware of the difficulties Italians had". Precise interpretations like these of the production itself do not lead our students to extrapolate or abstract from the production to cover the general cross-cultural issues which it also set out to explore. Only one of the respondents in the Italo-Australian group notes the production's underlying cultural project. This person is a teacher in her thirties who states that the purpose of the theatre is "to broaden understanding of both cultures; to give a new culture - Italo-Australian - an identity". Although one of several who connects the "purpose" question specifically to *Red Like the Devil*, she is the only respondent in the 219 sample as a whole who is finely tuned in to the motive force behind Doppio's work, namely, that it is giving voice to *Italo-Australian* culture, which, because it is a hybrid, is indeed a new culture.

The issue of culture is generally taken up by Anglo/Celts, whose main points of reference are well illustrated by the following examples. A university-educated environmental planner states that the theatre's purposes are "transport from daily routine; give meanings, interpretation of society, history, culture - across cultures and within". A theatre administrator in her forties writes: "Ideally, to broaden awareness of other possibilities, ideas - a cultural yardstick! If it entertains *and* awakes/heightens awareness, so much the better". A retired university-educated person (who did not note her/his gender) writes: "To entertain and instruct. Another purpose is to disseminate an understanding of other cultures, e.g. the Russian, French, Greek, etc. classics". By the same token, Anglo/Celts also take up issues to do with art. The words of a technical college-educated houseworker in her sixties eloquently sum up allusions made by others to how the theatre aims to give talented people an outlet for their abilities. She writes: "Entertainment; venue for audience participation;

outlet for skills in acting, stage design, choreography, voice production, musical ability, etc". A designer laconically notes: "To keep middle-class audiences happy, and serious actors/artists serious and hungry". But a theatre worker exclaims: "What a question to ask a practitioner! TO CHANGE LIVES".

Well, if Anglo/Celts are more inclined than Italo-Australians to discuss matters of culture and art, neither ethnic group gives evidence of the acute sociopolitical awareness that distinguishes the Turkish spectators at *No Fear*. As for the high school students in our Canberra audience, they are concerned with how the theatre expresses ideas and emotions, communicates messages, and shows aspects of life - generally "through entertainment", as one of them puts it. There is nothing startlingly different about the viewpoint of Italo-Australian high schoolers from their peers of other ethnic origins, except for the fact that they hardly refer to entertainment at all. Taken as a whole, the group of students, though articulate, tends to echo the points raised by those who are older than them. In other words, they do not stand out as having a different or "alternative" point of view. We are not here faced with a generation gap of any kind.

When we look right across the spectrum provided by my data on the different types of theatre attended by respondents, it is quite clear that the majority view focuses on entertainment. I am including in the majority view the multiple non-Anglo/Celtic groups represented, albeit in a very small way, in my surveys. We have seen how these non-Anglo/Celtic groups - the Turkish group excepted - essentially share the viewpoint of Anglo/Celts. In doing so, they are absorbed, to all intents and purposes, by the majority culture. Furthermore, by not offering a noticeably alternative role to the theatre, they can be said to be sustaining that culture. Given this general picture, what the respondents from the Turkish community seem to throw into relief is just how firmly implanted the notion of entertainment is in the majority culture's conception of the theatre. And the picture holds good despite the shades of meaning attached to the term "entertainment". Perhaps what we should be doing now is seeing whether, today, this scene is peculiar to, unique to, Australia or whether - and where and why - the scene is being replayed elsewhere in the world.