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Lifetime theater : a model for community theater based on the philosophy of Martin Buber

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**Lifetime theater: A model for community theater based on the
philosophy of Martin Buber**

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San Jose State University, 1990

U·M·I

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**LIFETIME THEATER: A MODEL FOR COMMUNITY THEATER
BASED ON THE PHILOSOPHY OF MARTIN BUBER**

A Thesis

Presented to

The Faculty of the
Department of Theatre Arts
San Jose State University

In partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Arts

By

Rita Faye Wadsworth

August, 1990

Approved for the Department of Theatre Arts

Dr. Robert Jenkins

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Dr. Richard Parks

Approved for the University

ABSTRACT

LIFETIME THEATER: A MODEL FOR COMMUNITY THEATER

BASED ON THE PHILOSOPHY OF MARTIN BUBER

By Rita Faye Wadsworth

This thesis proposes **LifeTime Theater**, a form of theater based upon the philosophy of Martin Buber.

Research on Buber's philosophy reveals three central elements: 1) the influence of theater on Buber, 2) his spiritual foundation in Hasidic Judaism, and 3) his insistence upon the critical nature of relationships as reflected in his concepts of **I and Thou**, and the **realm of dialogue**.

The goals of **LifeTime Theater**, in accordance with Buber's beliefs, are to foster dialogue, to create community, and to facilitate transformation in the lived reality of its participants.

These goals are illustrated through the examination of two existing theater companies, **A Traveling Jewish Theatre** and the Soviet-American production by **Theatre of All Possibilities** of **Peace Child**.

The Thesis concludes by presenting a practical example of **LifeTime Theater**--a Production Plan for a hypothetical production of Martin Buber's mystery play, Elijah.

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INTRODUCTION

I, Thou, and the Creative Spirit

The purpose of this thesis is to create a model of theater, called **LifeTime Theater**, which is grounded in the dialogical perspective of Martin Buber. Martin Buber (1878-1965), Jewish scholar, interpreter of Hasidism, and pre-eminent advocate of life as "dialogue," spent his entire life addressing what has become the modern malaise. Buber believed that **difference** is the reality of existence, and that it is possible for individuals, through acknowledging and confirming this essential polarity, to transcend difference.

The goals of **LifeTime Theater**, in accordance with Buber's beliefs, are to foster dialogue, to create community, and to facilitate transformation in the lived reality of its participants. The true beginning and true ending of **LifeTime Theater** takes place within the lived reality of the performers and the audience, for it is based on the belief that theater, like life, is a domain in which characters and personalities pass through any

number of changes on the road to self-discovery.

This type of creative, collaborative project can address the problem of alienation from both the internal and the external.

Since the advent of industrialized society and the succession of rapid changes that have followed in its wake, the world has become more complex, more affluent, and more stressful. Along with unprecedented levels of material comfort and technological productivity, the Western world has created a sense of isolation and loneliness and a growing disillusionment with such established institutions as church, school, and government--even the family unit has grown suspect.

Noted sociologist and academician Robert A. Nisbet, in his book The Quest for Community, describes the alienation in society:

In studies of the aged, the adolescent, and the infant; of marriage, the neighborhood, and the factory; of the worker, the unemployed, the intellectual, and the bureaucrat; of crime, insanity, alcoholism, and of mass movements in politics, the hypothesis of alienation has reached an extraordinary degree of importance. (Nisbet 15)

But this should come as no surprise--indeed, the problem of isolation and the need for community is so commonly repeated in a number of disciplines that it is difficult to state the problem in a fresh way. Any number of books will give an analysis of the causes of

alienation, depending upon the writer's viewpoint.

The internal perspective, advanced by philosophers, theologians, psychologists, and others, considers the primary source of alienation to be within the individual and to be characterized by a lack of depth and wholeness. In this regard, theologian Paul Tillich mourns the loss of what he calls the dimension of depth:

Man in our time has lost such infinite concern. . . . The loss of the dimension of depth is caused by the relation of man to his world and to himself in our period in which nature is being subjected scientifically and technically to the control of man." (Tillich 76)

Dr. Carol Pearson, Jungian psychiatrist and scholar, describes the individual's process of attaining wholeness as "the hero's journey."

Heroes take journeys, confront dragons, and discover the treasure of their true selves. Although they may feel very alone during the quest, at its end their reward is a sense of community with themselves, with other people, and with the world. (Pearson 1)

She defines heroism as a matter of integrity, and warns that before a person can open up to a sense of oneness with others, (s)he must take this "journey." "If we do not risk, if we play prescribed social roles, instead of taking our journeys, we feel numb; we experience a sense of alienation, a void, an emptiness inside" (Pearson 1).

The external perspective is emphasized by political theorists, economists, sociologists, etc., who focus upon social conditions, on institutions, and on other external causes as the primary source of alienation.

From Buber's standpoint, the major problem blocking dialogue, and therefore community, is a tendency toward inauthenticity which is generated both internally and externally:

The tendency toward appearance which mars the life of dialogue has its origin . . . in the ordinary amenities of civilized life which make us habitually pretend toward others what we do not feel; in the institutionalization of social life which makes us tend to relate to others on the basis of our relative positions in these institutions . . . in our inner divisions which make us unable to relate to others honestly because we cannot relate as whole persons; in our unawareness of the extent to which our values and attitudes arise, not from a genuine relation to truth, but from the social attitudes of the groups to which we belong. (Dialogue 97)

The ideal society, for Buber, would address both internal and external causes, resulting in a conscious community of individuals who have developed an internal sense of wholeness and meaning. Dr. Scott Peck, a practicing psychiatrist and author of the provocative best seller on relationship, The Road Less Traveled, addresses this issue in his latest book, The Different Drum: Community Making and Peace. Peck defines a community as a "group of individuals who have learned how to communicate honestly with each other, whose relationships go deeper than their masks of composure, who have developed a significant commitment." (Peck 59) Peck recognizes the need for the individual to address

and resolve internal issues, but he points out that this is not enough:

Psychologists . . . envision as the goal of human development that we should become fully ourselves . . . that we are called to power . . . that we are called to wholeness.

But the reality is that we can never be completely whole in and of ourselves. . . that there is a point beyond which our sense of self-determination not only becomes inaccurate and prideful but increasingly self-defeating . . . that we are inevitably social creatures who desperately need each other for any meaning to our lives whatsoever. (Peck 53-55)

This thesis suggests that it is the quality of the **relationship between the external and the internal** which determines isolation or community. This emphasis on relationship is based upon the writings of Martin Buber.

What is the role of theater under these circumstances? Does it have a purpose, a responsibility to ameliorate conditions, to effect change?

In early cultures, community was created and reinforced through rites of passage, mythic rituals designed to shift consciousness away from the day-to-day and establish a separate space and time beyond secular routines.

In today's secular society it may be the role of the artist to serve the functions of the rite of passage. Although art contains the possibility of taking us beyond

ourselves, theater and drama provide a special invitation to another time.

There are many possible ways that theater can address the problems indigenous to modern culture. This thesis proposes that theater can be instrumental in ameliorating the problem of alienation through (1) supporting the wholeness of the individual, (2) developing community, and (3) strengthening the **relationship between** the individual and the community.

The intention of this thesis is to show how Buber's understanding of genuine dialogue is the essence and result of **LifeTime Theater**. Chapter 1 will present Buber's philosophy, focusing on three central elements: 1) the influence of theater on Buber's philosophy, 2) his spiritual foundation in Hasidic Judaism, and 3) his insistence upon the critical nature of relationships as reflected in his concepts of **I and Thou**, and the **realm of dialogue**. In order to clarify this philosophy and show its relationship to theater, a number of sources in a variety of fields have been used. On the subjects of alienation and community, these include the works of sociologist Robert Nisbet, theologian Paul Tillich, and psychiatrist Scott Peck. In the area of archetype, myth, and ritual the sources used include psychiatrist Carol Pearson, religious historian Mircea Eliade, and mythologist Joseph Campbell.

In Chapter Two, the goals of **LifeTime Theater** will be presented and illustrated through the examination of two existing theater companies, **A Traveling Jewish Theatre** and the collaborative effort of **Theatre of All Possibilities** and **The Peace Child Foundation**, which embody its principles.

Chapter Three will present a practical example of **LifeTime Theater**--a Production Plan for its proposed production of Martin Buber's mystery play, Elijah.

CHAPTER 1

The Philosophy of Martin Buber

The Influence of Theater on Buber's Philosophy

During the first three decades of the twentieth century, Buber's work in experimental theater and his writings on theater reflected, in a theatrical context, the themes which were essential to his life.

Buber's 60-year relationship with theater began when, as a young student in Vienna, he for the first time experienced drama brought to life through theater.

What Buber learned here about the spokenness of speech, the livingness of the speech that 'takes place' in the 'between' was not and could not be restricted to the artistically detached sphere of the theater alone. It illuminated for him human existence as such, and just as such became for him one of the highways leading to his classic philosophical work, I and Thou. (Theater 4)

From that time on, Buber had an abiding and intense interest in the theater. In 1922, the year before Buber published I and Thou, he wrote and published in Masken, the journal of the Dusseldorf Playhouse, a short essay called "Drama and Theater," in which many of the

principles he discussed in relationship to theater intertwined and interacted with his studies in Hasidic Judaism and his developing philosophy of dialogue and the I-Thou relationship.

In this essay Buber describes what he sees as the underlying tension in all existence which is heightened in drama:

Regarded as poetry, drama is the formation of the **word** as something that moves **between beings**, . . . the **tension** between word and answer . . . that two men never mean the same things by the words that they use . . . from which comes then the interplay of openness and closedness, expression and reserve." (Theater 83)

Much of Buber's philosophy is built upon this theme of the underlying polar tension between beings. He considers a unified polarity to be the basis of theater's essential elements--**transformation** and **dialogue**.

Transformation

Buber believed that the transformational quality of theater exists in a living relationship among the actors, the audience, and the play. In order to establish such a relationship, he points out what he considers the two basic movements of humanity. "The first of these two movements Buber calls 'the primal setting at a distance', the second 'entering into relation'" (Knowledge 21).

Buber theorizes that in the "prepersonal, primary state of things," each individual "has" **distance** which is

its essential otherness. From this distance, each is capable of entering into **relationship**. The fact of this essential difference is the nature of reality and, for Buber, in relationship each individual can confirm that difference and meet the other as (s)he is. "The overcoming of distance does not mean simple unity, but the polar tension of distance and relation together" (Knowledge 21-22).

For Buber, the transformation which occurs in theater occurs in carrying out the polar tension of "being" (distance) and "presenting" (relation). Out of this fulfillment of polarity comes the origins of the actor's transformation, "The belief of primitive man that if he assumes the aspect and gestures of another being--an animal, a hero, a demon--he can become this other being. This is no mere belief but rather an experience" (Theater 84).

This two-fold nature of theater, its paradoxical juxtaposition of **presenting** and **being**, has been described by phenomenologist and historian of religion, Mircea Eliade, as 'hierophany'--his term for the 'act of manifestation of the sacred':

the manifestation of something of a wholly different order, a reality that does not belong to our world, in objects that are an integral part of our natural 'profane' world. By manifesting the sacred, any object becomes something else, yet it continues to remain itself, for it

continues to participate in its
surrounding cosmic milieu. (Eliade 141)

Buber describes one aspect of this unified polarity
in terms of the ability of the ancient stage to " . . .
transpose us into the midst of a world which we are
incapable of entering" (Theater 18):

The spectator, blown upon by the breath of
the chorus, is irresistibly carried away by
it through awe before the drama that
sacramentally and genuinely **takes place** in
this space before him wherein he cannot
enter. (Theater 19)

This unified polarity transforms more than the
physical space of the theater. Buber also considers this
concept of unified distance and relationship to be the
determining factor in the actor's transformation. He
defines the "great" actor on the basis by which he
"becomes" the character:

The great actor does not put on masks. In
those formative hours in which he
decisively lives his role, he penetrates--
transforming himself, surrendering his
soul and winning it back again--into the
center of his hero and obtains from him
the secret of the personal kinesis, the
union of meaning and deed peculiar to him.
(Theater 68)

Buber contrasts this transformation with the method
of the "false" actor:

The false actor . . . fingers the hero
with his senses, collects the hero's
voice, his mien, his gestures. He
explores the world of the doer in order to
acquire his material and then constructs
out of it a mask. (Theater 67)

For Buber, "All high excitement has its origin in a polarity that is experienced, realized, carried out" (Theater 68). In transformation the actor carries out the polarity in which he stands by realizing its opposite pole, through 'finding' the meaning. It is through fulfilling the duality, that the actor establishes unity.

Dialogue as Bridge

From the primal distance, the spokenness of speech emerges as the vehicle capable of making real the meeting and the response. In the unfolding of the sphere of the between we bridge the gap between distance and relation. Buber exalts drama, written as poetry, as "the rising to artistic independence of dialogue" and describes what this drama must contain:

When the word really becomes speech, it is spoken in the context of relationship, of overagainstness, of mutuality, and takes its meaning from the fact that it is said by one person and heard by another who has an entirely different relationship to it, even as he stands on an entirely different ground from the speaker. Only that drama which includes in seed that elemental fact of over-againstness is capable of being taken up into the living over-againstness of real theater. (Theater 7)

Buber describes ancient Greek tragedy as a point where these two principles--the impulse for transformation and the poetry of dialogue--were united with the third essential ingredient:

The play comes into being with the appearance of the spectators. . . . spectators participated in the power and the awe of the event, in the certainty of faith in its magic, on whose success their happiness, at times their lives, depended. (Theater 85)

The result of this three-way dynamic--the poetry of the dialogue, the transformation of the actors, and the power and awe of the spectators--was an event which transcended the theater, that reflected ". . . a sacred reality that concerned the reality of the life of each of the watching and listening audience" (Theater 86).

As a living collaborative art, the connection between performers and audience can be extremely powerful, at times actively involving the audience in the journey to sacred time by providing a connection between the play and the audience member's life's needs. Buber describes this transcendent reality in terms of the creation of nonsecular space and time:

The play made itself felt . . . in a space that was lifted out of the context of space . . . in a time that was detached from the course of time and fulfilled itself without before and after . . . (Theater 54)

Mircea Eliade, indicates the special function of theater for this purpose:

We must never forget that one of the essential functions of the myth is its provision of an opening into the Great Time, the primordial. . . . Concentrated time, time of a heightened intensity; a

residuum of, or substitute for, magico-religious time . . . is also **the specific dimension of the theater** . . . that makes us live in time of a quality other than that of secular duration. (Eliade, p. 95)

As in ancient rites of passage, the audience is removed from its ordinary day-to-day and transported to the timeless reality of the play. Because the audience comes with a "willing suspension of disbelief," they are agreeing to experience the theater with a sense of wonder somewhat akin to that which primitive society brought to their rituals.

Buber describes the transformational character of this relationship upon the audience:

Before the great play all of them, those stirred to action and those aware of the performance, had a single heart in common. From the one fell off the firmness of his resignation, from the other the seeming force of his superiority; they became one in the act of inclusion. (Theater 61)

Buber is very clear about the significance he places on dialogue in theater. He compares their relationship to love and sex.

. . . the spiritual principle of dialogue and the natural one of mimic transformation-play relate to each other as love to sex . . . as love needs sex in order to obtain body, and sex needs love in order to attain spirit. (Theater 86)

He places first priority on the spiritual aspect of dialogue, for although he concedes that, "The drama that cannot become embodied in a theater exists disincarnate

in lonely spirit," he contends that "the theater that is not obedient to drama bears the curse of soullessness" (Theater 86).

This priority which Buber places upon dialogue places a great demand upon the dramatist:

The dramatist has the gigantic task of making the heroic wonder living ever again, so that it will not be perceived as the exception from the natural law but as the original and lawgiving, the act of the central, the decisive man. (Theater22)

In his own play, Elijah, Buber attempted to meet his own challenge.

Elijah

In Elijah, Buber has joined many of the elements of his life philosophy with his beliefs about the nature of drama and theater. These include his philosophy of dialogue and I and Thou relationships, as well as his "ever-growing understanding of the essence of biblical Judaism as the dialogue between God and man, the living word of the 'between.'" (100)

Although Elijah was not written until 1956, Buber had been interested in writing a play on Elijah since his days in the Jewish Renaissance Movement at the turn of the century.

In 1965, the play was translated into English by Maurice Friedman, translator of many of Buber's works and a leading interpretator of his thought. Later that

year the play was produced at Manhattanville College. Friedman's enthusiasm for Buber's work extended beyond its philosophic content to its effectiveness for theater, "Elijah is not only an expression of the life and thought of one of the great religious figures of our century but is also a powerful play" (Theater vi).

Elijah is Buber's account of the biblical story of the prophet Elijah, who is called by God to protest the spread of the worship of Baal throughout Israel, led by Israel's rulers King Ahab and Queen Jezebel. The conflict in the play reveals a central theme in Buber's beliefs:

The cognizance of inner duality and the immanent demand for decision . . . divided the people into two psychologically distinct factions: one consisted of men who choose, who make decisions, who are impelled toward unconditionality and are dedicated to their goal; the other of laissez-faire men, decisionless men, men who remain indolently inert in their conditionality, and whose aim is self-aggrandizement and self-satisfaction--or, in Biblical terms, men who are servants of God, and men who are servants of Baal.
(Theater 98)

In the play, the "servants of Baal" are King Ahab, Queen Jezebel, and most of the people of Israel. King Ahab is depicted in what Buber considers the first stage of evil--the state of decisionless. Buber sees this first stage occurring passively, rather than as an active choice. "It should be remembered, however, that those

men do not by any means decide for Baal and against God, but that, as stated by Elijah, they 'hobble along on two tree-limbs' (I Kings 18:21)" (Theater 98).

During the course of the drama, Ahab joins Jezebel in Buber's second stage of evil-- "the crystallizing of this course of failures to decide into the refusal to allow oneself to be called to account for anything. 'What I say is true because I say it; what I do is good because I do it'" (Theater 98).

Elijah, who stands for decision and action as a "servant of God," reflects the sacramental existence which illustrates Buber's definition of the hero. The life of a person of decision, in Buber's sense, assumes mythic proportions, as each interaction assumes meaning for the destiny of the universe. The hero sees purpose and takes responsibility in the everyday.

In Elijah is revealed Buber's concept of tragedy as the opposition of two, each as he is, ". . . without the resources for bringing the polar tension into the reconciling reality of genuine dialogue" (Friedman Theater 99). Buber views this tragic contradiction as part of the dramatic reality of existence and the basis of all drama.

Thus through the mere fact, given form by dialogue, of the **difference** between men there already exists that dramatic entanglement which, woven with the unfathomableness of destiny, appears as

'tragedy,' the same entanglement which drawn into the all-too-clear world of caprice and accident makes for 'comedy.'
(Theater 84)

Joined with this view of tragedy is the conviction, basic to Judaism, that tragedy can be taken up into the higher reality of redemption:

What saved Judaism is not the fact that it failed to experience 'the tragedy', the contradiction in the world's process, deeply enough; but rather that it experienced that 'tragedy' in the dialogical situation, . . . it experienced the contradiction as theophany. This very world, this very contradiction . . . shall be--not overcome--but consumated.
(Theater 50)

The central motifs in Elijah correspond to Buber's understanding of the underlying issues of Jewish existence:

the demand . . . to make real the kingship of God through justice, righteousness, and lovingkindness; the task of building the covenant of peace with other nations and of building true community; the attack on all forms of dualism that relegate religion to the cultic and the 'spiritual' and place no demand on everyday life . . .
(Theater 106)

In order to more clearly understand these issues and Buber's perspective, it is necessary to examine in detail Buber's deep connection with the beliefs of Hasidic Judaism.

Buber and Hasidism

Historic Context

Martin Buber was born in an environment of religious and scholarly 'enlightenment' in Vienna in 1878. He was educated at the Universities of Vienna, Berlin, Leipzig, and Zurich. His numerous published works cover wide aspects of contemporary and religious thought. Although he began his public career as a writer and spokesman for cultural Zionism, the most decisive influence upon his life and thought was his ongoing involvement with Hasidism.

. . . at first he drew largely on the mystical element, and then, increasingly, on the existential element in Hasidic teaching. Primarily, however, Hasidism has meant to Buber the most impressive effort made at the realization of true community from the days of the prophets. (Herberg 35)

Buber devoted over fifty years of his life to the study of Hasidism. In 1960, he published The Origin and Meaning of Hasidism which, combined with his earlier work Hasidism and Modern Man, constitutes his comprehensive interpretation Hasidism and the Way of Man. His work also includes and the translation and presentation of two volumes of Hasidic tales, Tales of the Hasidim: Early Masters and Tales of the Hasidim: Later Masters.

Hasidism was a significant religious movement within Judaism founded by Israel ben Eliezer, the Baal

Shem Tov (Master of the Good Name), which flourished in eighteenth century eastern Europe and which continues, although without its original spirit, in existence to this day.

Buber describes Hasidism's contribution as a way of life, rather than a teaching of new spiritual elements, and the **Baal Shem Tov** as a model for living, rather than as a teacher.

What constitutes the uniqueness and the greatness of Hasidism is not a teaching, but a mode of life that shapes a community and that is consonant with community by its very nature. (Origin 24)

Hasidism's remarkable success and rapid spread among the **am-haaretz** (the uneducated country people), were due in part to the magnetic spiritual power of its leaders, and partly to its "democratic" reassessment of values. Hasidism transfers highest esteem from the person of learning and family, to the person who "lives Torah." Buber describes this individual as one of "sacramental existence."

To the man of sacramental existence no kind of acquired rules and rhythms, no inherited methods of working avail, nothing 'known,' nothing 'learned'; he has to withstand ever again the unforeseen, unforeseeable moment, ever again to extend liberation, fulfillment to a thing or being that he meets in the moment flowing toward him. (Origin 171)

Hasidism spoke " . . . of a God who was present and directly accessible throughout His universe, of a world

in which even the seemingly most irretrievable evil was capable of (indeed longing for) redemption, and of an essential role of each . . . in the joyous transformation of matter into spirit, of mundane into holy" (Holtz 363).

Essential Elements

Through Hasidism was created a fusion between two streams of Jewish tradition; that of its religious law -- the ritual formation of Judaism, with the Kabbala, a tradition of religious knowledge. From this union of revelation and mysticism came a major distinction between Hasidism and most mysticism--Hasidism's hallowing of time.

In Hasidism, two lines meet in full clarity, lines which it is usually assumed cannot meet by their very nature: the line of inner illumination and the line of revelation, that of the moment beyond time and that of historical time. Hasidism explodes the familiar view of mysticism. Faith and mysticism are not two worlds. (Origin 239)

For Hasidism, the point where "the moment beyond time" and "historical time" meet is in the current moment, in the here and now of the human person. For Hasidism, redemption, like creation, takes place at every moment:

Of highest importance to it [Hasidism] is not what has been from of old but what again and again happens; and again, not what befalls a man but what he does; and not the extraordinary that he does but the ordinary; and more still than what he

does, how he does it. Among all the movements of this type probably none has proclaimed as clearly as Hasidism the infinite ethos of the moment. (Origin 16)

Hasidim's emphasis upon personal piety in all aspects of life came from the mystical doctrine of 16th century Kabbalism, which posited that throughout the world, sparks of the divine presence, the **Shekinah** can be found in all things. Thus, the indwelling God may be found in all things--nothing is without this spark, which is imprisoned in a shell of darkness. Each individual's task on earth is, in all encounters, to liberate the **Shekinah** through the act of turning and returning to God. To this ancient teaching, Hasidism added a new light and strength to the "old-new principle that it represented":

. . . the principle of the responsibility of man for God's fate in the world . . .
 .the influence of the acting man on the destiny of the universe, even on its guiding forces--that is an ancient idea in Judaism. (Origin 117)

The **Baal Shem Tov** expanded the teaching of the sparks into an ethical task that embraced one's entire life. "All that you do, do it with the strength of your soul and of your thoughts that you may join the Holy One with his **Shekinah**." (Origin 85) From this, he taught, first, that all one does must be done with one's whole being, physical and spiritual. And, second, that the intention of releasing the **Shekinah** implied living a life which hallowed all it touched.

The **Baal Shem Tov** saw life as "an unbroken chain of meetings, each of which demands the person for what can be fulfilled by him, just by him and just in this hour." This responsibility included the creative aspect also, according to the **Baal Shem Tov** who "saw even in the power of imagination a kind of meeting for which there are special tasks" (Origin 86).

Hasidism had no formulae or magic for redemption, instead it taught a way of being:

only the hallowing of all actions without distinction, only the bearing to God of ordinary life as it comes to pass and as it happens, only the consecration of the natural relationship with the world possesses redemptive power. (Origin 107)

This type of sacramental existence led naturally to development of spiritual communities. "The whole personal attitude of faith that constitutes the essence of this life, works to form community" (Origin 26).

In Hasidism, this relational aspect permeated the way of life of the **Baal Shem Tov** and the zaddiks (spiritual leaders of each Hasidic community) who followed him.

Masters of an unmistakably sacramental form of existence appear, men, therefore, in whose existence, in whose whole life-attitude, in whose experiences and actions the consecration of the covenant is present and fully operative . . . The classic zaddik, is only an especially clear, theoretically delineated stamp of the same archetype. (Origin 173)

These communities did not exist in isolation, for their members remained in families and public life. Each spiritual community which formed around a zaddik drew individuals who eventually formed their own communities which moved the teaching forward in their own manner.

But the most important fact about them is that each of them was surrounded by a community that lived a brotherly life and was able to live it through the fact that a leader was there who brought them all closer together by bringing them closer to that in which they believed. (27)

These Hasidic teachings were extremely influential in the development of Buber's philosophy. If the Shekinah rests in all things, then it is possible to enter into a relationship with all things. All life, therefore, is encounter, and "'profane' merely designates that which is not yet sanctified" (Bergman 95). From this Hasidic base, Buber's experiences led him to publish his most famous work, I and Thou.

I, Thou, and the Realm of Dialogue

I and Thou

To Buber, religion is not an objective set of beliefs, but a lived reality. Buber sees the religious realm existing in a certain type of relationship, which he characterizes as **I-Thou**, and contrasts with the alternate world view he describes--that of **I-It** associations.

The world is twofold for man in accordance with his twofold attitude.

The attitude of man is twofold in accordance with the two basic words he can speak.

One basic word is the word pair I-Thou.

The other basic word is the word pair I-It; but this basic word is not changed when He or She takes the place of It. (I-Thou 54)

For Buber, I-Thou establishes the world of relations.

The primary word I-Thou designates a relation of person to person, of subject to subject, a relation of reciprocity and mutuality involving meeting or encounter. . . . Everything, from ideal essences to a seemingly trivial thing can 'address' man. It can 'speak' to him, signify a meaning, be a source of revelation. It becomes a 'Thou', that which is not merely passively perceived but actively enters into the perceiving. (Bergman 86-87)

The I-Thou relationship is an event, characterized by encounter, response, and exchange, which takes place between two beings who none the less remain separate.

To Buber, the "realm of It" is the sphere of goal-directed verbs, of activities that have something for their object: to experience, to perceive, to feel, to imagine, to manipulate, to use. In the It-World, each individual is alone and separate and associates with others as objects outside oneself.

The Realm of Dialogue

Buber believed that the dialogue between individuals is the fundamental fact of human existence, and that at

root society's problem is based in a lack of genuine dialogue, "Dialogue in the full sense of Buber's now mature philosophy of dialogue: address and response and the reality of meeting and of the 'between'" (Theater 43-44).

The meaning of this type of dialogue is found in neither one nor the other of the partners, nor in both added together, but in their interchange. It is this emphasis on the interchange, rather than what happens within the individual, which distinguishes the "dialogical" from the "psychological." Buber compares the Hasidic teaching of the Shekinah with modern psychiatry, stressing the significance placed by the latter upon the "between":

In Freudian psychiatry the theory of 'sublimating the libido' applies this Hasidic principle, but only psychically, within. 'Sublimation' takes place within man, the 'raising of the sparks' takes place between man and the world. (Origin 83)

Buber's concept of distance and relationship is an essential element of his meaning of dialogue. This recognition of the primal otherness, the difference between beings leads to a type of exchange which distinguishes dialogue from dialectic.

Dialogue recognizes differences and never seeks for simple agreement or unanimity. **Dialectic**, in contrast, begins with the categories of 'the same' and 'the other,' but excludes the reality of 'the between'

and with it the recognition of real otherness as that which can be affirmed even in opposing it. (Theater 44)

When the authentic "happening" of the I-Thou relationship takes place, a third entity is created, what Buber called the sphere of the between. This entity is the realm of dialogue, and Buber describes the life of dialogue as a continuing unfolding and interchange in the I-Thou relationship. In genuine dialogue:

each of the participants really has in mind the other . . . and of establishing a living mutual relation between himself and them. The essential element of genuine dialogue, therefore, is 'seeing the other' or 'experiencing the other side.' (Life of Dialogue 87)

For Buber, that which is unique to an individual can be directly known only in relationship--it is the between that is the "really real."

This reality, whose disclosure has begun in our time, shows the way, leading beyond individualism and collectivism to... the genuine third alternative... which will help to bring about the genuine person again and to establish genuine community. (The Way of Response 55)

It is Buber's insistence on dialogue and the quality of relationship between internal and external upon which his concept of community is grounded.

The need for community

For Buber, wholeness is the unity of all faculties within the individual, and this he calls 'spirit'.

Wholeness does not exist apart from relationship and "he couples the recognition that true freedom comes only from personal wholeness with the assertion that freedom is only of value as a springboard for responsibility and communion" (Life of Dialogue 92).

In I & Thou, Buber indicates what he considers the key to the problem of alienation. "The aim of the book . . . is to diagnose certain tendencies in modern society . . . and to indicate how the quality of life might be changed radically by **the development of a new sense of community**" (I & Thou 38).

Thus, for Buber, the goal of dialogue is the establishment of community:

But even the perfection of the individual is only a condition and not the goal. The most essential thing is that among these people a real comradeship should be created, and that all of them, the spiritual and the simple, those who can perceive the real meaning of redemption and those who cannot, should unite to work together for its sake. (Origin 210)

According to Buber, the process of developing communal relationships can be looked at in three stages: acceptance, affirmation, and confirmation. Acceptance is basic in any human relationship. By acceptance Buber means the acknowledgment of a person's humanness. Mere acceptance is not enough for community because it implies only tolerance for another, with no desire to penetrate beneath the surface in "living intercourse."

Acceptance leads to affirmation. If I affirm another, I open up the possibility of communication with that person in the process. To affirm another means that I not only accept (s)he is, but also am interested in participating in a dialogue with him/her in the present moment with no future guarantees.

For Buber confirmation means more than affirmation because it opens up into the future and affirms a person not only as they are now, but also as they will become. Confirmation, therefore, opens up untold possibilities for human relationships. "True confirmation means that one confirms ones partner as an existing being even as one opposes him" (Way of Dialogue 86). Buber considers the need for confirmation to be a prime motivating factor:

The basis of man's life with man is twofold, and it is one--the wish of every man to be confirmed as what he is, even as what he can become, by men; and the innate capacity in man to confirm his fellow men in this way (Life of Dialogue 81)

Thus, for Buber, we can see that genuine community is neither internally generated nor externally manifested, but rather "...the fullness of the relational force that permeates their members." (98)

The quality of this relationship is essential to the development of community, for true community can only be founded upon changed relations. In Buber's view:

God is in all things, but he is realized only when individual beings open to one another, communicate with one another, and help one another--only where immediacy establishes itself between beings. The true place of realization is the community, and true community is that in which the godly is realized between men. (45)

True community, to Buber, is a different entity than the "mechanical association of isolated self-seeking individuals held together by force, compromise, convention, and public opinion" (45) which occur in the It-World.

True community...comes into being on two accounts: all have to stand in a living reciprocal relationship to a single living center, and they have to stand in a living, reciprocal relationship to one another. (I & Thou 94)

Buber's concern with community and relationship is echoed in the writings of Dr. Scott Peck, whose investigation and research as a psychiatrist led him to the conclusion that the establishment of community was necessary for individuals to find meaning.

For Peck, community contains an element, like Buber's 'betweenness', that is "mysterious, unfathomable . . . more than the sum of its parts" (Peck 60). When he "stumbled" upon this mysterious essence through personal and professional experience, he determined to attempt to consciously develop the principles and processes which leads to true community.

In his analysis, Dr. Peck describes the elements of community as they relate to genuine relationship. They include a desire for inclusivity, a "constant reaching to extend oneself"; commitment, the "willingness to coexist, to counterbalance our individuality"; and consensus, the "transcendence of individual differences." Perhaps most important is the contemplative character required by the self-examination of the community-building process. "The essential goal of contemplation is increased awareness of the world outside oneself, the world inside oneself, and the relationship between the two." (66)

Peck concludes with a series of what he calls "community exercises," which are community-building processes. As examples he gives silence, stories, sharing dreams, prayers, song, and liturgy. He suggests that any or all of these tend to overcome individual isolation and personal enmity. Upon consideration, one can see that these "exercises" are potential elements of theater.

In the following chapter the Buber's philosophic foundations will be translated into goals for **LifeTime Theater**, and two examples will be given of existing theater companies which operate in accordance with these principles.

CHAPTER 2

LifeTime Theater

A theater based on I-Thou is a theater of **relationship**, characterized by the **demand** for dialogue and for community. It emerges from the Hasidic belief in the presence of the **Shekinah**, the divine spark which is trapped within each object and creature on earth. It believes in the decision and action of the individual. It welcomes all aspects of life as part of the whole. It believes in the possibility of redemption of evil.

What, specifically, makes theater **LifeTime Theater**? Buber's concepts can lead to theater in a variety of forms. This chapter first translates Buber's ideas of sacramental existence, transformation, and dialogue into goals for a theater of today--**LifeTime Theater**. It then includes excerpts from interviews, articles, and written intentions of two existing theater companies.

There are many differences between **A Travelling Jewish Theater** and **Theatre of All Possibilities/Peace Child**--their format, their target audience, the size and scope of their productions, to mention just a few.

They were founded independently, without conscious connection to the principles of **LifeTime Theater**.

Nevertheless, they each reflect a perspective which brings them in line with Martin Buber's teachings concerning relationship and dialogue. Each in its own way is based in a nonsecular time and space where transcendental concerns are addressed. Each brings the audience into living relationship, dissolves the barriers between life and theater and manifests the principles of **LifeTime Theater**, striving for its goals of wholeness and community.

Goals of LifeTime Theater

Establishing Nonsecular Space

The first goal of **LifeTime Theater** is to use theater to establish a nonsecular space and time where transcendental concerns are addressed, and to facilitate its participants bringing insights gained away from theater into everyday life.

This transcendental space can be created, according to Buber, through the unified polarity of distance and relationship of play, actors, and audience. This unified polarity manifests itself in a variety of ways.

In terms of the scenic event, according to Buber, the unity of distance and relationship involves the institution of simple, homogenous forms that work as a

totality along with the creative use of light.

In terms of casting, it is essential that actors be in conscious agreement with the goals of **LifeTime Theater** and that actors selected live the concept of unified polarity as a means of transformation.

In creating a nonsecular space and time, theater "sets the stage" for transformation.

Hallowing the Everyday

The second goal of **LifeTime Theater** is to produce theater which inspires the participants to hallow the everyday. For Martin Buber, "The essence of man is determined by the fact that he shares in finitude and in infinity" (Origin 15). This juxtaposition of the sacred and the secular can be translated into theatrical terms in form and content.

In process, Buber's emphasis on the moment and upon community suggests a process which includes improvisation and collaborative creation as part of its structure. This collaborative approach is further supported by Buber's belief in dialogue and the between as "the really real."

In play selection, the concept of the hero as an individual of decision and sacramental existence is an important image for **LifeTime Theater**. Buber rejected what he considered the diminishment of the hero in modern drama. "The hero does not do the superhuman. Rather the

others do the subheroic. The hero is the measure of things" (Theater 24).

The hero's being is in his form (Gestalt), in his indissectible totality, his powerful completeness, unbrokenness, wholeness in himself. . . . To perform psychological analyses of him leads to contradiction: because the hero is the revelation of wholeness. (Theater 25)

Buber's emphasis upon relationship effects the fate of his hero. For Buber, the hero's quest leads beyond the limits of the individual to the need for community and the thirst for genuine dialogue.

Creating Dialogue and Community. The third goal of **LifeTime Theater** is to create theater that recognizes **difference** as the reality of existence, and that bridges this distance through facilitating genuine dialogue and the growth of community.

Buber contends that the strength of a Jewish contribution to drama is the understanding of **difference** as the nature of reality, and ". . . the task of bringing forth redemption out of the very contradictions of earthly existence" (Theater 49).

This recognition and confirmation of difference is significant, therefore, in both the selection of material for **LifeTime Theater** and in the development of relationship and community involved in each production.

Buber relates dialogue to love, poetry, and spirit, and suggests that it provides the underlying meaning in

theater. How do Buber's ideas of dialogue relate to **LifeTime Theater**?

LifeTime Theater takes place on the edge, in the dialogical realm where souls engage, where possibilities reside. For a theater rooted in the dialogical philosophy of Martin Buber, it is the quality and purpose of the relationships within it which are of particular significance. I-Thou relationships require mutuality and commitment, as they strive to remain authentic and to meet, encounter, and confirm in Buber's Realm of Dialogue.

LifeTime Theater's goal of community can manifest theatrically as a medium expressing a love of life and a sense of wonder, touching people of all ages and cultures, creating a place where individuals can meet, engage, and celebrate difference and through this meeting find and share those elements of common humanity that transcend difference. This sense of community expands to the audience through a format of encouraging community participation in theater, and it often utilizes audience participation in its presentation.

Although there are many obvious differences between **A Traveling Jewish Theater Company** and **Theater of All Possibilities**, each in its own way reflects these goals of **LifeTime Theater**. These companies are not necessarily the only two, nor the best, nor even the most

representative. They are, simply, two theater companies which have been accessible to me and which show ways in which Buber's concepts can be expressed theatrically.

Examples of LifeTime Theater

A Traveling Jewish Theater (ATJT)

History and theatrical context. **ATJT** was founded in 1978 by Corey Fischer (actor, writer, maskmaker), Albert Greenberg (actor, writer, musician), and Naomi Newman (writer, director). Their goal was to give theatrical form to the Jewish visionary experience, utilizing traditional sources in an innovative way. Their first work Coming From a Great Distance was a collaborative exploration of the teachings of the founder of Hasidic Judaism, the **Baal Shem Tov**. Like Buber, they were profoundly affected by Hasidism.

. . . in many ways the spirit of the Baal Shem Tov's teachings has shaped the life of the Theater itself . . . All their work is created in the same way . . . Each work discovers the stories within stories--not only the tales of the Baal Shem Tov but how life now is taken up into those tales and emanates from them. (Griffin 44)

In the description of the company's theatrical context, they credit the influence of a number of theater companies, including The Moscow Art Theater, The Vilna Troupe, The Group Theater, The Living Theater and the work of Jerzy Grotowski, Peter Brook and Joseph Chaikin; who have "sought alternatives to theatre that is

commercial, hierarchical and empty of meaning."

The group characterizes its theatrical context in the following way:

First, a recognition that the roots of theatre lie in the realm of the mythic, the sacred and the communal; that theater can be an instrument of healing for people and cultures. **Second**, a willingness to enter unknown areas and allow form to grow organically... **Third** an appreciation of the rigorous discipline essential to the creation and performance of this kind of theatre. **Fourth**, a commitment to working collaboratively without rigid role distinctions... **Finally**, this context is shaped by an intention to keep the work accessible... The audience, ultimately, is a co-creator. (Theatrical Context, ATJT)

Many of the concepts discussed as part of **LifeTime Theater** become apparent in this context. **ATJT's** recognition of theater's foundations in myth, ritual, and healing relates directly to **LifeTime Theater's** goal of developing wholeness, and the belief that theater can facilitate the initiation of the hero's journey and the creation of a new mythology. In the company's written Note on Intentions and Sources, they state that their sources are drawn from ". . . legend, myth, folktale, Yiddish poetry, Yiddish vaudeville, apocrypha, contemporary writing. . . . We begin by finding their truth within us." **ATJT's** commitment to this search is not limited to the performers alone. **A Traveling Jewish Theatre** has developed an approach to workshops and training that uses storytelling and solo performance as

vessels for exploring the self, the other, personal myth, collective myth, ancestral material, and the act of performance itself.

ATJT is, like Buber, committed to the development of dialogue and the "between" that bridges the differences between people and cultures. "We perceive our time as one of cultural cross-fertilization. . . . Our own process of discovery becomes a mirror for all people engaged in a similar process. We offer our work as a bridge between the specific and the planetary" (Note on Intentions and Sources, ATJT)

Process. LifeTime Theater's emphasis on relationship and the need for community is reflected in ATJT's commitment to collaboration and audience input. Their creative process is reminiscent of Buber's life of dialogue and Peck's discussion of community. "Decisions there are not reached by vote; there is another more intuitive process, that includes within itself risk, the abandonment of one's formal idea of self, surrender to the wishes of others while still holding to one's own truth" (Griffin, p.45).

Co-founder Naomi Newman describes the group's process:

We wanted to create original works . . . works that came from and expressed our deepest and largest concerns. . . . Every theater piece has been a way of reconnecting to a piece of ourselves. We

develop our scripts through improvisations, exercises and visualizations calling forth responses from every layer of our being... We are creating in community. (Spiegelman 274)

Transformation. The significance placed by Buber on the relationship of the internal and the external is clearly a part of **ATJT**'s vision. Although, for example, **ATJT** explores Jewish themes, they do not seek a strictly Jewish audience. For **ATJT**, theater is a process of discovery, available as a mirror for all people engaged in a similar process. In the group's Note on Intentions and Sources, they state their work serves:

. . . as a bridge between the specific and the planetary . . . we are continually approaching the interface of the inner and the outer, the spiritual and the political, the personal and the collective. . . . When we tell the story of The Baal Shem Tov, we seek, without diluting his particularity, to recognize him as a universal archetype.

The permeability between theater and life described in **LifeTime Theater**' is reflected in Newman's description of **ATJT**'s effect upon their audience:

People who come to see us, and are moved by our work . . . tell us that they have entered, through our plays, a territory beyond the normal theatrical experience . . . In other words I believe they are talking about being led into 'soul' country, a terrain that is both familiar and unknown; where they simultaneously find and make their souls. (Spiegelman 274)

This vital element of **LifeTime Theater**, its

transformational quality, is most movingly expressed by writer Susan Griffin as she describes how **A Traveling Jewish Theater** has affected her life:

I have experienced a communion in this theatre that is now part of the rhythm of my thought, of this self who at the edge of her largest boundaries now suspects that boundaries do not exist, that in some way beyond common understanding, theatre, audience, men and women of legend, the living, the dead, the unborn, we are each other. (Griffin 49)

A Traveling Jewish Theater is a vivid example of how the principles of **LifeTime Theater** can manifest in theatrical form. It is a particularly fitting example of a theater based upon Martin Buber with his deep connection to Hasidism.

Theater of All Possibilities (TOAP)

History and theatrical context. TOAP was formally organized in 1984 by Dharaj Maxfield, when he wrote a grant to produce Peace Child, an exciting collaborative theater piece he had seen in San Francisco. For several years before that, Maxfield, working with children, had been producing peace-related theater pieces. In 1987, in conjunction with the **Peace Child Foundation** in Washington, D.C., TOAP produced a Soviet-American Peace Child. A cast of American young people traveled to the Soviet Union, worked collaboratively with Soviet youth for four weeks, then toured the play in both countries.

The history and theatrical context of Peace Child are relevant at this point, for there are many aspects of Peace Child which resonates with Buber's ideas of dialogue, the between, and of building community. David Woollcombe, an Englishman, wrote the original Peace Child script (its full name is Peace Child: A Musical Fantasy about Children bringing Peace to the World). In the remarkable accompanying document, the Peace Child Study Guide, he states his purpose. "Teaching peace . . . is a new challenge to teachers and curricula planners. It demands new techniques, new materials and new methodologies... Peace Child is one such new methodology . . . called 'doing a musical'." (Woollcombe 3)

In a taped interview in May, 1989, Dharaj Maxfield related the written purpose of his theater company: "**The Theater of All Possibilities** is dedicated to providing professional quality theater to audiences of all ages, beliefs, and backgrounds. We produce performance works in music, theater, and dance, which address and inspire the highest ideals and potentials. Our goal is to present idealistic visions as realizable possibilities." Maxfield pointed out that **TOAP** attempted to present these spiritual ideals in such a way as to transcend personal religious philosophy.

TOAP has earned respect in its community for its ideals and standards of performance, but its sphere of

influence expanded dramatically when it entered into collaboration with the **Peace Child Foundation** and created an international celebration. The Peace Child Foundation Study Guide describes the accomplishments of **TOAP**:

Theatrical Producer Dharaj Maxfield decided to do Peace Child to launch his **Theater of All Possibilities**. For three years, his theatre company has had Peace Child as an on-going focus. . . . As a result, the city of Santa Cruz instituted an annual Peace Day Festival. . . .

In 1987, Dharaj and company headed out for the USSR, where over four weeks, they worked with twenty U.S. children and a group of eleven Soviets at Camp Artek in the Crimea to prepare a new version of Peace Child which they then brought back to the USA for a tour of the San Francisco Bay Area. (Woollcombe 113)

Process. The Peace Child Study Guide outlines a process which resonates with ideas of dialogue and community. David Woollcombe explains why a playwright would encourage each producer to tear up his script and start again:

The central experience of Peace Child comes when the children performing it feel that they themselves are the Peace Children of the story--that they are actually using their own ideas and energy to bring Peace to the world. You can only give them this experience by creating with them, through improvisation and discussion, your own unique version of the Peace Child story. (Woollcombe 4)

This blending of the realities of the characters in the play with those of the children performing the roles is an example of LifeTime Theater's "permeability," life

spilling over onto the stage, and theater becoming part of real life.

Woolcombe becomes more specific when he describes the process by which he wrote the original Peace Child, which he recommends to all producers:

Set up improvisational sessions with your cast. Record them on a tape recorder... then start, line by line, scene by scene, to create a "line script"... Let your imagination run riot at this stage, but allow your inspiration to be dictated by what has arisen in the children's minds during the improvisation. (5)

Transformation. Both **Theater of All Possibilities** and Peace Child are based upon the idea of theater spilling over into life, effecting change in the real world. In an interview, Dharaj Maxfield explained his vision. "We're dedicated to works that communicate and inspire the highest ideal of what is possible to do as human beings... A good night of theater, but at the same time communicating what is possible--we can actually be abundant, we can actually live our dreams."

Peace Child is built upon a vision of youth exchange and the mission statement of the **Peace Child Foundation** affirms that it has been set up to make the dream of the play a reality. The play-within-a-play format of Peace Child further helps to blur the lines between theater and life, fantasy and reality. Peace Child takes place in the timeless Realm of Dialogue. Through the synergistic

collaboration of **The Theater of All Possibilities** and **Peace Child Foundation** has been created an exciting manifestation of the principles underlying **LifeTime Theater**. "It must be a collaboration--a partnership across the age barriers - across the ethnic, national, religious, and all the other barriers." (Woollcoombe 8)

In the next chapter, these principles will be put to a practical application--the production plan for **LifeTime Theater's** first production--Elijah.

Chapter 3

Elijah--A Hypothetical Application

If one were to attempt, in today's world, to produce a play based on Buber's philosophy, how would these abstract ideas manifest themselves in such practical areas as play selection, casting, rehearsal process, and set design? These questions are addressed in the following hypothetical production plan for **LifeTime Theater's** first play.

Elijah Production Plan

The entire production process of Elijah should include a conscious recognition and practice of the goals of **LifeTime Theater**. The designers, key production team members, and cast of Elijah would then be selected for their talent and creative imagination, their respect for the text, and for their commitment to the goals of **LifeTime Theater**.

Play Selection

In selecting the first production of **LifeTime Theater**, an obvious choice is Buber's own play, Elijah.

In dialogue, theme, and in the "over againstness" of the characters, Elijah represents the principles upon which LifeTime Theater is based. Elijah brings to life in dramatic form many of the theatrical and philosophic concepts Buber developed over the years.

In Elijah, Buber presents a powerful picture of a man of "sanctified existence" in conflict with man and God as he fulfills his destiny. For Elijah--God's Runner--this sense of purpose is a major motif.

Elijah is a challenging play, with dialogue that is powerful, and yet (uncharacteristically for Buber) surprisingly simple and straightforward. In the course of its twenty-three scenes, it ranges from intensely dramatic spectacle to subtlety and tenderness. As the play unfolds, Elijah reveals stories within stories--human stories with engaging conflicts.

The cast consists of Elijah, and an ensemble of 15 men and 10 women who perform a variety of roles. At least three men and three women need dancing ability. The cast would be selected through open auditions. The cast is crossgenerational, with ages ranging from pre-adolescence through old age.

The role of Elijah requires a powerful presence, considerable acting experience, and a strong singing voice. Although Elijah and Ahab are the only extensive roles, the remainder of the cast will be playing a

variety of roles requiring acting skill and the ability to shift rapidly from one character to another.

Part of the selection process for the ensemble should include a private interview to discuss the goals and underlying concepts and to determine if the individuals are capable of seeing these ideas and connections and carrying them out.

Goals of LifeTime Theater

Creating nonsecular space. The planning and rehearsal process will include techniques and exercises designed to bring the production out of the day-to-day, opening participants to experiencing things in a different way in order to effect transformation that transcends the limits of the theater.

Emphasis should be placed upon Buber's plea for a solution which translates "the scenic event" into "a space that is at once unified and changeable . . . through the institution of simple, homogenous forms that work as a totality . . . with the changeableness of light" (Theater 81).

The designers should be encouraged to imagine forms of theater which break tradition, which shake the audience's expectations of their usual theater experience; to think in terms of mythic images that transcend political and religious barriers.

Hallowing the everyday. The rehearsal space should be treated as a holy space--all eating, chatting, and breaks occurring elsewhere. Each rehearsal should open and close with a ritual centered around the **Shekinah**, from which participants may enter the subconscious through a variety of methods, such as guided meditation, visualization, music, dance, or improvisation. The work should grow organically throughout the rehearsal process using dialogue, imagery, and improvisation to prepare the actor to make a connection between his inner self and the outward behavior of the character.

Creating dialogue and community. The goal of creating community must be addressed from the first gathering of the designers and production team. Community-building exercises like those described by Scott Peck--silence, stories, sharing dreams, prayers, songs, ritual--should be woven into the fabric of the play. The rehearsal process should include a number of improvisation exercises for developing and strengthening group relationships and creating a community of actors.

Artistic Vision

Time/place/atmosphere. The play is placed in the timeless space of myth. The underlying aesthetic concept lies in the contrast between the stark reality of being, symbolized by Elijah, and the delusory opulence of

idolatry, represented by Ahab, Jezibel and the followers of Baal. This contrast should be presented through strong fundamental images in all design elements. The play's genre is classic tragedy, and it is performed in a presentational style.

Color and texture. Against the stark white of the arches, color and texture in costume and lighting will be used to underscore an essential contrast. The colors for Elijah's reality are austere earth tones, rough textures, stark and shadowy lighting. For Ahab, Jezebel, and the Baal scenes, we shift to the sensual overload of Baal's palace of dreams. Purples and reds, tight, black leather and studs, the glitter of gold and jewels, the sheen of satin and velvet, and furs--lots of dead animals.

Scenery. The action will center on a multi-level nonrepresentational unit, composed of three adjacent arches; two of them seven-foot high with a "roof" allowing a second playing area above. The third, center arch is 13 feet high, and has two playing areas within it. Changes in scene will be determined by light, sound, and by Elijah's progression from one playing area to the next. Behind the arches is a cyclorama which is back-lit with appropriate colors. The floor plan is included as Appendix A-1.

Costume and Makeup. There are two distinct styles of costumes. Costumes for Elijah and all those

unconnected with Baal are the rough textured austere earth toned robes and garments of Biblical times. Costumes for Ahab, Jezebel, and the followers of Baal are opulent punk. Ahab is dressed with splendor in black velvet and precious stones. Jezebel is in tight black leather, spikes, and covered with jewels. The ensemble wears black tights and leotard and changes character with overgarments appropriate for each role.

Lights and sound. There are heavy demands on both light and sound. There are a variety of special effects needed, including several mysterious ignitions, earthquake, storm, an enigmatic voice which emerges from various points on stage, and a battle scene for the climactic moment.

Music. The play has numerous occasions for music. First, there are several songs and dances indicated in the action. The followers of Baal use the sensuality of movement as part of their ritual, and the dance described in Scene 10 reaches an ecstatic frenzy. The music of Stravinsky seems appropriate--either Rite of Spring or Firebird Suite would create a suitable mood, and could be used as theme music in all the Baal scenes.

Elijah suggests the stern, severe music of Mahler. Elijah also sings; both the Twenty-Third Psalm and the Song of the Runner. His music should be simple and powerful--hopefully an original composition.

The Climax. The climactic moment of Elijah occurs during the heat of battle, when Ahab is hit and dies, with Elijah at his side. The entire scene requires heavy special effects, with the moment of Ahab's death highlighted.

Distillation

Elijah is called by God to demand Baal be banished. When Ahab refuses, Elijah prophesizes drought. Elijah feels the suffering of the poor and demands God's mercy. He challenges Baal to bring rain. Baal fails and God ends the drought with fire. Elijah sends Michaia to aid Ahab against Syria. Ahab and Jezebel murder Nabot. God sends Elijah to choose Elisha as next prophet. Michaia prophesies Ahab's death. Ahab dies in battle with Elijah at his side. Jezebel kills Michaia. Elijah leaves Elisha. God allows Elijah to be his runner. (100)

God sends Elijah to challenge Baal and prophesy drought. Ahab continues with Baal despite God's power. Ahab dies in battle. Elijah becomes God's Runner. (25)

Elijah challenges Baal. Ahab dies following Baal. Elijah becomes God's Runner. (10)

To run for God.

Production Schedule

The production schedule which follows reflects the goals of **LifeTime Theater** as they could be applied in an

actual production.

Four weeks before auditions. Invite design/production team to an informal celebration, allowing members of the team to meet and communicate in unstructured, pleasant surroundings.

Planning meetings should begin with a meditation and visualizations exploring Elijah's mythological and archetypal roots, the idea of contemporary Baal archetypes, and the juxtaposition of the two. At the first meeting, designers should hear the director's artistic vision, the style and mood of the play, the budget, and other specific details of the production. There should be sufficient time for problem-solving and creative brainstorming, and a production schedule with deadline dates should be agreed upon.

Auditions. Each audition should begin with a private interview to discuss goals and provide an opportunity for dialogue. All auditions will continue with a prepared monologue and improvisational exercises. Auditionees for Elijah will also have a singing audition and cold readings. A dance audition will also be necessary.

Initial Gathering. After the cast is selected, the entire ensemble will be invited to an informal celebration to meet, communicate, and bond. Sketches, fabric swatches, and a scale model of the set will be on

display, and designers will be available to answer questions.

Rehearsals. The rituals and exercises discussed above will be an integral part of all rehearsals. The rehearsal process, based upon one outlined in the book Improvisation (Hodgson 193-198), lends itself well to the goals. The process would last nine weeks, and can be divided into three functional periods.

The first three weeks would be a time of exploration with emphasis on improvisation. The purpose would be to become familiar with the main elements as they relate to the structural unity of the play. Actors would experiment with characterization and the many possibilities for behavior based upon the images that arise during guided meditations. With the exception of Elijah, the assignment of roles can occur later in the rehearsal process, allowing for more flexibility and actor input.

During the second three weeks, the ensemble has been cast, and the work is aimed toward a deepening of the understanding and work on characterization, atmosphere, and bringing the text to life. Improvisation, discussion, and character analysis would be done scene by scene, connecting the text with the contemporary commentary of the ensemble. Blocking is set, and the actors work to generate images which are out of the ordinary, to try

them out, and to receive feedback. The director should help to increase the actors' storehouse of images through music, specific objects, costumes, photos, pictures, or props. By the end of this period all actors should be off book.

In the final three weeks, the goal is to get the images out of the actors' heads and onto the stage, to implement the ideas generated in earlier stages, and to detail and refine the performance. It is the time for the actor to develop a full-blown character by adding three-dimensionality from his or her experience and the internal search for detail. During this stage, attention is focused on continuity and flow, and run throughs are done with as few interruptions as possible. The technical elements should be added as early as possible during this period. During the last two weeks, audiences should be invited to runthroughs, with opportunity for them to share their responses scheduled into the rehearsal time.

Conclusion

If Elijah is produced with the conscious intent of creating the "realm of the between," it has the possibility of facilitating a shift in consciousness in some members of the audience which encourages the initiation of the hero's journey. It is the intent of

LifeTime Theater to make porous the distinction between life and theater, thereby effecting transformation in the lives of the performers and the audience. Elijah represents an exciting opportunity to test Buber's ideas of dialogue and transformation with a play specifically written to evoke the realm of the between. It must be brought to life in order to evaluate its possibilities for community, for **LifeTime Theater**, like Hasidism, can be directly known only in a living relation.

Appendix A

10

CURTAIN LINE

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