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The origin of Street Theatre (ST)

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ABSTRACT

Street Theatre (ST) originated in Russia in 1918. Sources reveal, "Mystery-Bouffe" is the First Street Theatre in the world. Then the trend was spread in other countries of the world. Street Theatre has occupied a place for itself in World Theatre History.

Keywords: *Street Theatre (ST), Mystery-Bouffe, Public awareness, Revolutionary change.*

INTRODUCTION

Street Theatre (ST) is a much-used media in the world now. It is performed in an open space before the public to create awareness on a certain social issue or problem. Every type of theatre style has been created in the world out of a social necessity. Street Theatre (ST) also has been created out of a social necessity. Very little information seems to exist about the origin of Street Theatre. It has its origin and path of evolution. It has carved a niche for itself in the theatre history of the world. It is pertinent to know about its origin.

The inception of Street Theatre in Russia in 1918:

It is known from various secondary sources that Street Theatre (ST) originated in Russia in 1918. Dr. Narayan Sahoo has written in his book about the origin of Street Theatre in the world, "The inception of Street Theatre goes back to the early twentieth century, probably the second decade. Critics take its emergence to be in the year 1918. It is because the first anniversary of the historical Russian Revolution was celebrated this year. Vsevolod Meyerhold produced Mayakovski's 'Mystery-Bouffe' play in which he combined the elements of the tent show with revolutionary poetry and put it up for several thousand audiences in City Square. Similar theatrical performances remained popular in the workers' state for several years. This was the beginning of the new type of agitprop theatre performed on the streets, at factory gates, markets, dockyards, playgrounds, backyards, and so on. 'Mystery-Bouffe' is taken as the First Street Theatre in the World. This theatre of Mayakovski continuously performed the theme of the Great October Revolution

of Russia after 1918. Not only it has inspired the Russians from peddlers to miners, children to the old but also boosted for making their future. This theatre had made a pool for itself to create public awareness and bring a revolutionary change in the society.”

“Mystery-Bouffe” is a socialist dramatic play representing a universal flood and the subsequent joyful triumph of the proletarians over the bourgeoisie. It depicts a struggle between the two groups. Mayokovsky stated in a preface to the 1921 edition that “In the future, all persons performing, presenting, reading or publishing Mystery-Bouffe should change the content, making it contemporary, immediate, up-to-the-minute.” So; the themes of the shows were almost social and innovative forms of some important events. The place of performance was either a public place, place of work, or courtyard of a house. Over time, this theatre was able to bring a revolutionary change all over the Republic. Soviet Street theatres played a vital role during the Second World War. These theatres, to strengthen the confidence of the soldiers, performed shows in the Lorries, defense camps in the forests, war tanks, hospitals underground camps, etc. The objective was to create excitement, and confidence among the tired and broken-hearted soldiers and to generate new thoughts among them.

Street Theatre (ST) in other countries:

Originating in Russia Street Theatre gained large-scale popularity in most of the countries of the world and it inspired the public. The role played by Street Theatre (ST) in various countries, like Vietnam, Japan, the U.S.A., Palestine, France, Cuba, and South Africa was remarkable. The role of Street theatre in China was noteworthy. Street play was involved in all the propaganda and public movements that occurred in the country. In 1920, when the communist party was formed, Street Play was given the task of its propaganda and publicity. Street Theatre groups could mobilize the public for communism. The contribution of Street Theatre (ST) to the long war by Vietnam against Japan was memorable. During the mass revolution of Cuba, the Farmer’s revolution of Mexico in the U.S.A., and some freedom movements in America and Africa, Street plays also played a crucial and vital role.

Colin Chambers has written, “Street Theatre, a term used loosely to denote performance outdoors but, not in any defined venue. Looking back to the European tradition of *commedia dell’arte* and strolling players, modern Street Theatre (ST) is popular in aim and goes to its audience rather than the other way around. Its different manifestations depend on time and place; it can range from Promenade theatre through a town or village to agitprop outside a factory or on a demonstration, linked up with a social or political campaign. It took on a particular meaning in the 1970s and 1980s with the rise of alternative theatre and was often related to community theatre or attempts to revive carnival aspects of playmaking. Examples can be found in the work of groups such as the San Francisco Mime Troupe, Bread and Puppet Theatre, Odin Theatre, Welfare State International, Red Ladder or Blue Blouse. The anti-globalization and environmental campaigns of the 1990s often used forms of Street Theatre in their protests and propaganda.”

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