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**T. Edward Hambleton's Phoenix Theatre, 1953–1982: Its
impact on the theatre in New York City**

Butt, Rex, Ph.D.

City University of New York, 1993

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T. EDWARD HAMBLETON'S PHOENIX THEATRE, 1953-1982:
ITS IMPACT ON THE THEATRE IN NEW YORK CITY

by

REX BUTT

A dissertation submitted to the Graduate Faculty in
Theatre in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, the City
University of New York

1993

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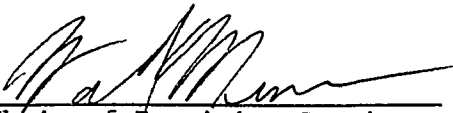
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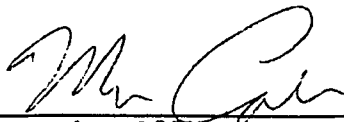
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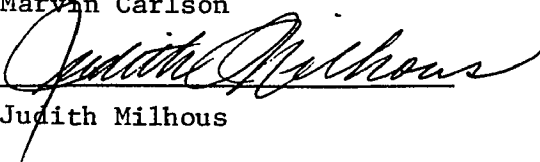

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To Karen, Jared, and Chad

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

When the Phoenix Theatre started production in the fall of 1953 under the combined management of T. Edward Hambleton and Norris Houghton, the post-war wave of off-Broadway activity was already established. Though Eva La Gallienne's Civic Repertory and the Group Theatre were well in the past, Julian Beck and Judith Malina's Living Theatre had been active since 1947, and Jose Quintero, Theodore Mann, and Emilie Stevens at the Circle in the Square had been drawing occasional notice from critics, most notably for their July 1952 production of Summer and Smoke. Hambleton, who had been producing in New York since the late 1930s, and Houghton, an experienced designer and director, did not, however, want to cast their new venture in the mold of the Living Theatre or of the Circle in the Square. Their approach shared more with the grand scheme of Eva Le Gallienne, Margaret Webster, and Cheryl

Crawford's ill-starred and short-lived American Repertory Theatre of 1946-47 than with any of the budding off-Broadway operations of the early 1950s. Unlike Le Gallienne, Webster, and Crawford, Hambleton and Houghton had no plans to retain a permanent company or to run their productions in a rotating repertory. Their purpose was articulated piecemeal in press releases and interviews with journalists prior to and just after the 1 December 1953 opening of their first production, Sidney Howard's Madame, Will You Walk?¹

In a 29 November 1953 New York Times article, Houghton announced that he and Hambleton intended to establish a theatre on this side of the Atlantic Ocean akin to the Lyric Theatre, Hammersmith, London. Under John Gielgud's direction the Lyric Theatre was featuring established West End actors in limited runs of plays that were not economically feasible for commercial production. Houghton explained that with the Phoenix he and Hambleton proposed to give artists a chance to "create away from the economic pressures of Broadway, divorced from the frenzied tailoring process that must turn every undertaking into a 'smash' hit."² In the same article Houghton stressed that this venture would not be an off-Broadway operation because it would not feature inexperienced actors looking toward Broadway and using their performance "as a means to an end--not the end itself." Hambleton reiterated this

point during an interview for an article in Cue, saying, "We are not a showcase for new young talent. That is important, of course, and we want to see youngsters get a break. But what we are providing is a place where stars and professional actors can act without the hit psychology lurking in the background."³ Clearly then, Hambleton and Houghton were not trying to attract the actors who were typical performers in off-Broadway productions.

The size of Hambleton and Houghton's theatre was also atypical of off-Broadway theatres of the early 1950s. The theatre they had chosen for their venture, located at Twelfth Street and Second Avenue, had been built in 1927 as the Yiddish Art Theatre by Maurice Schwartz and had changed hands and names several times since Schwarz had lost the theater during the 1929 stock market crash.⁴ Although, like most of the off-Broadway theatres of the period, it was in lower Manhattan, the Twelfth Street Theatre was an unusual house for an off-Broadway operation. A fully equipped proscenium theatre with a seating capacity of over 1,100, it was neither a cramped hallway like the Cherry Lane or the Provincetown nor a converted cafe like the Circle in the Square. Producing in such a space necessarily meant higher production costs than were the norm for off-Broadway theatres of the 1950s, and Hambleton and Houghton were prepared to accept these expenses. They had amassed a bankroll of \$125,000 for the

first season, and the design team they had chosen reflected their intention to mount polished productions. Donald Oenslager and Alvin Colt were respected veterans and were not likely to be hired to mount productions on shoe-string budgets. Later in the season, Hambleton and Houghton acknowledged that Madame, Will You Walk? had cost \$40,000 to mount, a sizable outlay by off-Broadway standards of the time.

Unquestionably, the Phoenix was not an off-Broadway house; yet, Hambleton and Houghton had announced that neither was it a Broadway house. What, then, was the Phoenix? This question baffled the critics. If it was neither Broadway nor off-Broadway, it fit no existing category and the press found it essentially undefinable. Though critics admired certain of the Phoenix' announced goals (most notably the desire to work against the commercialism of Broadway), they found this lack of definition problematic. First, George Jean Nathan and later Eric Bentley questioned Hambleton and Houghton's purpose.

In his 27 December 1953 review of Madame, Will You Walk? Nathan compared the enterprise unfavorably to the City Center and accused the Phoenix of doing just what it claimed it would not do: become a vehicle for pre-Broadway showcases. He noted that the play was far from atypical for Broadway. Indeed, it had been attempted by Broadway producers in 1939,⁵ and Nathan suggested that "it was chosen less for any virtues it might conceivably possess than because two recently successful Broadway players, Jessica Tandy and Hume Cronyn, having a little spare time on their hands, thought the Phoenix would be a convenient place to try it out as a possible Broadway vehicle for themselves."⁶ He ended his review saying that the Phoenix "will not get far critically if it simply patterns itself after the general Broadway theatre and attempts to conceal the patterning in superficial artistic gestures." A few months later Eric Bentley was to raise similar concerns. In his review of Coriolanus, the Phoenix' second production, he asked that the Phoenix "find an intellectual identity for itself as Houseman . . . [had] with the Mercury."⁷

As pointed out in 1959 by Albert Bermel, Hambleton and Houghton took note of such criticism and tried to provide some sense of focus that they could call their own, occasionally addressing the issue in lengthy program notes.⁸ Bermel observed that through the fall of 1959

Hambleton and Houghton had tried to answer these concerns in a variety of ways each season: through press releases and articles as well as through program notes.

Ironically, amidst all this concern about what it was, the Phoenix managed to define, not itself, but off-Broadway. During the mid-1950s Hambleton and Houghton initiated tactics at the Phoenix that other off-Broadway houses were to adopt years later, and they paved the way for many of the management practices that are common today in nonprofit institutional theatres in New York. Critics, though willing to grant that the Phoenix provided starts for a long list of American theatre's best known and respected artists, have more often commented upon what the Phoenix failed to accomplish: its lack of clearly articulated political or artistic focus, its failure to find a permanent home, its inability to establish a world-class resident repertory troupe in New York City. Indeed, critics and historians have tended to ignore the contributions that the Phoenix Theatre made to New York City theatre, not only during the 1950s when Hambleton and Houghton were managing jointly but also during the ensuing twenty-odd years when Hambleton managed the Phoenix on his own.

The purpose of this dissertation is to examine these contributions and to demonstrate that, throughout his thirty-year tenure as the managing director for the

Phoenix Theatre, Hambleton associated with a variety of partners and artistic directors in an ongoing effort that developed new markets for professional theatrical production in New York City--new markets that redefined not only the economic but also the aesthetic boundaries of production.

This study will trace the development of the Phoenix Theatre chronologically through its twenty-nine-year history, 1953-82, and will examine the innovative methods of production which Hambleton introduced through his management of the Phoenix. The treatment will be chronological and will compare and contrast the Phoenix to Broadway theatres and to the institutional theatres with which critics have tended to group it: specifically Circle in the Square, City Center, Lincoln Center Repertory, the Manhattan Theatre Club, Playwrights Horizons, and the Public Theatre. This comparison will show that the Phoenix Theatre, far from an insignificant, though occasionally brilliant, failure, was a seminal catalyst in the development of theatre in New York City over three decades.

The second chapter (1947-53) provides a brief assessment of the pervasive optimism of the post-war United States and defines Broadway and off-Broadway as they were when Hambleton and Houghton founded the Phoenix. It examines the prevailing repertoire of Broadway and offers

details about off-Broadway production of the period that have received scant attention.

Chapter Three (1953-57) covers the first four seasons of the Phoenix Theatre. It shows how Hambleton and Houghton's work at the Phoenix grew logically from the work that each had done prior to 1953 and compares the Phoenix program with those of other theatres both on Broadway and off-Broadway during the 1950s. It explains how the Phoenix redefined off-Broadway by introducing production strategies other off-Broadway managers came to embrace years later.

The discussion then turns in Chapter Four (1957-63) to additional methods of production that the Phoenix pioneered. This chapter shows how the Phoenix converted to nonprofit status, introduced education programs, and attracted the first foundation and government subsidies in New York City. It also covers the three seasons in which the Phoenix first experimented with a resident company when Stuart Vaughan was the theatre's artistic director.

Chapter Five (1958-76) covers Hambleton's efforts to bring repertory to Broadway. It examines the merger of the Association of Producing Artists (APA) and the Phoenix into the APA-Phoenix, and it outlines Hambleton's plan to bring the APA-Phoenix to the Lyceum theatre. It points out the weaknesses in that plan and explains the ways in which Hambleton altered the plan to create the New Phoenix

Repertory which operated on Broadway for four seasons. It ends with a discussion of Hambleton's ground breaking efforts to transfer nonprofit productions to commercial settings.

The sixth chapter (1976-1982) is a record of Hambleton's encouragement of new plays. Contrasting the Phoenix to other New York theatres that were offering new plays during the period, it covers the Phoenix' return to off-Broadway and examines the Playwrights Commissioning Program that developed under the literary manager, Anne Cattaneo, in 1979 and continued until the Phoenix finally closed its doors in 1982.

Considering the length of time that the Phoenix was active, surprisingly little has been written about it. Two dissertations have been written about the Phoenix: Jack Porter's "A History of the Phoenix Theatre, New York City, 1953 to 1961" (University of Denver, 1962) and Robert Falk's "A Critical Analysis of the History and Development of the Association of Producing Artists (APA) and the Phoenix Theatre (APA-Phoenix)" (Wayne State, 1970). Both Porter and Falk offer limited histories of the Phoenix, Porter's ending in 1961 and Falk's in 1970, but neither attempts to compare the Phoenix Theatre to other theatres during the periods they examine or to assess the impact that the Phoenix Theatre had in New York.

Porter's work is a general history of the Phoenix from its founding in 1953 through its first eight seasons. The heart of his dissertation is a rather formulaic season-by-season chronicle. For each season he summarizes critical response to each play, and he finishes his discussion of each season with a brief account of box office records for the year. His introduction places the Phoenix within the context of the independent theatre movement of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, but his references to such theatres end in the 1930s with the Group Theatre. Porter does not explore the relationship between the Phoenix and other off-Broadway theatres of the 1950s, one of the issues discussed in the first two chapters of this dissertation. After covering the Phoenix' first eight seasons, Porter offers a short evaluation in his conclusion. In it he briefly discusses critical response, noting that certain (though unnamed) critics wanted to establish new criteria for evaluating such endeavors as the Phoenix, but he offers no documentation for this assertion. Certainly, his observations are limited by the fact that they are offered in 1962. In the ensuing years a much larger body of criticism has become available that aids such analysis.

Falk is more interested in the APA than in the Phoenix. His dissertation is a chronicle of virtually the entire history of the APA (1960-69), but he deals with the

Phoenix only during the period of Hambleton's association with Ellis Rabb, 1964-69. He offers a detailed account of these five seasons, paying particular attention to the tensions that developed between Rabb and Hambleton. Like Porter, Falk provides information concerning the operation of the Phoenix during the period he examines, but neither he nor Porter addresses the question of how the Phoenix fit into the development of theatre in New York City during these decades.

In his concluding chapter Falk makes two brief statements that are germane to the contents of this study. First, he connects his discussion of the APA-Phoenix to the emergence of regional theatres during the 1950s and 1960s, noting that the trend was to move away from, not toward, New York--but he does not offer any detailed comparisons. Second, he observes that the APA would not have received major foundation support had it remained an itinerant company instead of associating with the Phoenix--but he does not examine the role of the APA-Phoenix in attracting foundation support for New York City theatre. He develops neither of these points, and, since his focus is upon the APA, he does not relate Hambleton's efforts with the APA to his earlier work with Stuart Vaughan as Chapters Three and Four do below.

Another published assessment of the Phoenix is a chapter, "The Phoenix Rises," in Stuart Little's Off-Broadway:

The Prophetic Theater (New York: Coward, McCann, and Geohegan, Inc., 1972). In this chapter, Little attempts to assess the development of the Phoenix and its relationship to New York City theatre. Published in 1972, the chapter amounts to just over twenty pages of text and ends, like Falk's dissertation, with the dissolution of the APA-Phoenix. Little breaks down the years 1953-70 into five periods or "phases" of development, though in reading the chapter it is difficult to discern exactly what each of these phases is.

One additional account of the Phoenix during its early years was published in 1991: a lengthy chapter (also entitled "The Phoenix Rises") of Norris Houghton's memoirs, Entrances and Exits: A Life In and Out of the Theatre (New York: Limelight Editions, 1991). In it Houghton covers the years in which he co-managed the Phoenix with Hambleton, 1953-62.⁹ Being a memoir, the book focuses upon Houghton's interaction with the people he encountered while managing the Phoenix. Like Porter, Falk, and Little, Houghton does not evaluate the contributions that the Phoenix made to theatre in New York. Nevertheless, he does end his chapter with two brief assertions that will be more thoroughly examined in this dissertation. His first claim is central to the second chapter. Of the Phoenix, he writes:

To a substantial degree it changed the way the theatre operated in New York City. It succeeded in making

stage folk and the general public realize that there were other stages and other reasons to produce than Broadway's and other motivations than commercialism. It stood as a signpost pointing the way toward a new land: "off-Broadway."¹⁰

Indeed, Chapter Two offers proof that Houghton's assertion is not merely correct: it is an understatement. More than just a "signpost pointing the way toward" off-Broadway, the Phoenix was the first substantial outpost in that frontier. Though smaller settlements may have preceded it, the Phoenix defined the law of the land and determined that this new territory would be more than a mere colony to be raided at will by the mother country.

Houghton's second claim is that the Phoenix helped to alter the course of theatrical production throughout the nation since the regional theatre movement arose "in conscious or unconscious emulation" of the off-Broadway that the Phoenix helped to engender.¹¹ Though Houghton's claim has credence, its scope is broader than the thesis of this dissertation. Regional theatres will be examined in comparison to the Phoenix' financial structure, to its programs in education, and to its commissions for new work, but no attempt will be made to substantiate Houghton's suggestion that the Phoenix laid the foundation for the regional theatre movement.

Since no book-length work that assesses the relationship of the Phoenix to other producing bodies is available, methodology of research concentrates on an

examination of materials available in the extensive Phoenix Theatre archive at Yale University's Beinecke Library. This large collection occupies over four hundred linear feet of shelf space and includes contracts, prompt scripts, box office statements, correspondence, publicity and production photographs, house and stage manager reports, and much more from virtually every production that the Phoenix mounted from 1953 to 1982.¹² Items from the collection that are useful in this study include correspondence, office memos, budget proposals, box office records, grant proposals, financial statements, minutes of board meetings, and programs. Information gained from these sources is balanced against accounts in newspapers, magazines, scholarly journals, and the brief coverage of the Phoenix offered in books that address the period. Additional information has been obtained from interviews with artists and administrators who worked with the Phoenix.

Through the evaluation of information available in these sources, this dissertation identifies T. Edward Hambleton's contributions to the development of theatre in New York City over three decades through his management of the Phoenix Theatre. Specifically it substantiates several claims: that the Phoenix was instrumental in establishing off-Broadway as an alternative to Broadway for established artists; that it played a central role in

instigating nonprofit production in New York City and in wooing foundation and public support for nonprofit production; that as an outgrowth of its concern for expanding the potential audience for theatre, the Phoenix actively involved high schools in its program, establishing procedures later followed by other theatres; that, not only interested in expanding audience, the Phoenix, more than any other theatre in the city, worked to expand Broadway's limited repertoire through its long-term attempt to reinstitute permanent professional repertory on Broadway; and that, failing this goal, the Phoenix was later central in the effort to resurrect off-Broadway as a venue for the production of new works and in the effort to encourage playwrights through a unique commissioning program.

All of the above accomplishments have gone unnoticed, and critical and scholarly response to the Phoenix suggests that it merely managed to keep its doors open for nearly thirty years by grasping at any expedient measures available. Though Hambleton's Phoenix Theatre was far from the clearly perceived, intensely pursued vision preferred by critics and historians, it was a significant force in the development of theatre in New York City that deserves to be given careful attention.

CHAPTER 2

THE POST-WAR NEW YORK THEATRE

Throughout its history the Phoenix Theatre was a rather fuzzy, ill-defined, bird. Rising from the ashes of a decaying Broadway, it resembled a few species that had preceded it; yet, despite its likenesses to the Theatre Guild and the Civic Repertory, it refused efforts of classification, whether such efforts came from its critics or its founders. In retrospect, the emergence of the Phoenix in 1953 seems remarkable and timely: remarkable in that no predecessor presaged its appearance, timely in that New York's theatre needed rejuvenation. Although other theatres hovered about the ashes that gave rise to the Phoenix, none flew ahead of it in its path.

The argument of this chapter is that the first among the markets for theatrical production that the Phoenix established was off-Broadway as it was finally defined in the late 1960s. Unlike the post-Phoenix off-Broadway, the

off-Broadway of 1953 was concerned with a single problem: the lack of a middle ground between Broadway and amateur theatre. A vast chasm separated the two, and several people were working to bridge it; but all of these efforts were being attempted from one side of the chasm, that of the amateur theatre. No one was attempting to build across from the other side of the chasm, that of the professional theatre. Although it would be convenient for the sake of symmetry to argue that Hambleton and Houghton worked from the opposite side of the gorge, reaching from the the professional theatre to the amateurs who populated off-Broadway in the early 1950s, it would also be inaccurate both as a description of what Hambleton and Houghton were attempting and as a description of what off-Broadway was to become. Like other Broadway veterans, Hambleton and Houghton were concerned not with the plight of amateurs who hoped to rise to stardom but with the profession and what was happening to it. They were not striving to build a bridge to the amateur theatre. Instead they were trying to build a new roadway that ran parallel to the existing professional theatre.

Despite the naivete of those who dominated it, the off-Broadway movement of the early 1950s lured amateurs and enslaved them to an old dream: if they worked hard enough, they might be discovered and become Broadway stars. For the young hopefuls who embraced this dream,

off-Broadway was not an end in itself. It was merely a vehicle, a means of conveyance that could transport them to the desired destination: the Great White Way. They had no concerns about the fate they would meet after they had reached the destination. Yet if they were lucky enough to have the dream come true, they found themselves indentured to Broadway's chief god, the box office.

In contrast to this dead-end dream, the purpose of the Phoenix was to attract professionals and free them from this indenture which stipulated that, although a Broadway acting career was ostensibly glamorous, it was also stultifying because the box office dictated what roles one could play, and the range of choices was narrow. Hambleton and Houghton sought to widen the range of choices by freeing their theatre from the restraints of the box office. Unlike the rest of off-Broadway, the Phoenix was intended to be an end in itself, not a stepping stone to Broadway. Of course, Hambleton and Houghton's original plan included transferring an occasional production to Broadway, but, unlike the rest of off-Broadway, such transfers were the means by which they intended to finance their alternative to Broadway, not the end to which they aspired.

In explaining how the Phoenix Theatre was founded, Norris Houghton states that he and T. Edward Hambleton were sitting over lunch at the Players Club to "cogitate

upon a revolution of sorts in the theatre of their day."¹ Those who know Norris Houghton would have no trouble conjuring a vision of the impish way in which he would utter such a claim, but there could hardly be a less likely setting for the formulation of a revolution than the staid environs of a New York club, and there could hardly be two less likely suspects for plotting said revolution. One was an Indiana boy from missionary stock who was always a bit of an egghead, the other a scion of a wealthy Baltimore banking family who bore a vague physical resemblance to a Teddy bear. Both were very much a part of the Broadway establishment--Houghton as a designer-cum-director and Hambleton as a producer. Furthermore, Houghton's original plan for the Phoenix had emerged from his knowledge of the work of John Gielgud, Pamela Brown, and Paul Scofield at the Lyric Theatre, Hammersmith, London. These were among the most firmly established actors of the English stage, hardly likely inspirations for a theatrical revolution.

Still, what Hambleton and Houghton were plotting was a revolution. Like most revolutions, it was a sloppy affair, full of stops and starts, redirections and confusion. When the dust settled, the results may not have been exactly what the instigators had originally planned, but life was different for everyone. Prior to the revolution, off-Broadway had been only a training ground for

youngsters in which novices worked so that they could get to Broadway. After the revolution, off-Broadway had become a playground for adults in which veteran artists worked so that they could get away from Broadway.

An explanation of how Hambleton and Houghton's revolution took place requires several steps: first, a reconstruction of the theatrical market as it existed on and off Broadway prior to the founding of the Phoenix; second, an explanation of what the Phoenix set out to accomplish and how its aesthetic aims and production strategy differed from those of the managements that preceded it; third, an examination of the impact that the Phoenix had upon the market it encountered; and last, a description of the new off-Broadway market in the 1960s and an explanation of the ways in which it reflected the policies used by the Phoenix.

Unlike the cynicism that prevailed during the 1960s, the pervasive mood of the United States in the early 1950s was optimism. Without this optimism many of the efforts that served to revitalize New York's theatre might never have been attempted. American know-how had saved the world from European insanity and Asian expansionism. Uncle Sam had entered the war with one black eye, but he came out of it with his head high. Among the items he brought back in his duffel bag was a surprising notion that the United States might now be the leading nation of

the globe. From this side of the Atlantic Ocean, all was right with the world.

From another perspective, the actions of House Committee on Un-American Activity [hereafter HUAC] ruffled Hollywood's feathers and disturbed the nest a bit. The result of HUAC's tactics were devastating for those accused and blacklisted, but the discontent that brewed beneath Joseph McCarthy's affront to the Left remained in check. Widespread protest that challenged the Red Scare's political agenda would not surface until the nation was deeply embroiled in Viet Nam. Anyone who felt that HUAC had nothing to pursue was far to the left of the of the sentiments of the heartland. From the perspective of middle America, anyone connected with Communism was working to destroy the freedoms which American soldiers had just fought so hard to win. In June 1950 hostilities began in Korea, and that fall voters sent those seen as soft on communism packing.² Two years later, as proof that they still looked back to American war activity for guidance and believed the country must guard against the communist threat, the populace elected Dwight D. Eisenhower to the White House.

Despite the Cold War and its hot spot, life in the United States was upbeat and optimistic. The nation was euphoric over its recent accomplishments. In two decades it had weathered the Depression and won a global war.

Given this situation, it is certainly reasonable that the United States should have felt ready to prove itself the cultural as well as the economic and military equal of Europe. Eugene O'Neill had shown the world that an American could write plays on a par with the recent masters of Europe, and Arthur Miller and Tennessee Williams were proving that O'Neill was not an anomaly. They, too, had attracted international attention.³

Williams had sprung to the critics' attention in 1945 with The Glass Menagerie and proved two years later that the attention was well-deserved with A Streetcar Named Desire. Miller's debut was somewhat less impressive. In 1945 The Man Who Had All the Luck had met a cold reception and closed after one week. Two years later, All My Sons seemed a formulaic, if tightly constructed, melodrama, but in 1949 Death of a Salesman created a storm of raves from the critics and won a large popular following. If Broadway could nurture two such brilliant young playwrights in four years, what might be expected of the future?

Within this upbeat environment Hambleton and Houghton launched the Phoenix Theatre. Given the confident national spirit, it was quite consistent for them to believe that their undertaking would bear fruit. In analyzing the Phoenix' first years Stuart Little wrote, "These were the Eisenhower years, years of self-improvement and optimism, of world competitiveness as yet

uninhibited by inner anxieties. It was wholly in keeping with the national mood for the Phoenix to judge itself against world standards."⁴ The course that Hambleton and Houghton chose was an ambitious one, but they did not consciously set out to redefine off-Broadway and create an entirely new market for production in New York. They were quite aware, however, that they were working against the grain of legitimate production, and they intended to have an impact on the way that plays were produced in New York.

Along with their disenchantment with Broadway's reliance upon the box office, Hambleton and Houghton brought considerable experience to their joint enterprise. After abandoning a career in set design, Norris Houghton had been working as a director, his most prominent credits being Macbeth, starring Michael Redgrave in 1947 and Billy Budd in 1951. These credits suggest that Houghton was building a career as a director, but he had found these experiences less than totally gratifying. He was particularly distressed by the fate of Billy Budd, which had occupied him for over two years. The press was ecstatic, but audiences had dwindled. Houghton felt the critics had unwittingly undermined the production with the stodgy wording of their raves that proclaimed the play "a stern and tragical philosophical contemplation" and a "profound, philosophical tragedy."⁵ He began looking for a different method of operation that would loosen the box

office's stranglehold on artistic choices. Amidst this search he contacted T. Edward Hambleton, an acquaintance who had been making a name for himself as a producer.

Hambleton had been producing actively since his graduation from Yale in 1934. After a year in the Yale School of Drama, he served his apprenticeship by founding a summer theatre in 1935 with Halsted Welles at the Theatre-by-the-Sea in Matunuck, Rhode Island. The method of operation for this theatre resembled that practiced by the post-war off-Broadway groups. Of this theatre, the Christian Science Monitor wrote, "The playhouse staff and most of the actors and actresses are in the enterprise . . . on a share arrangement. Each gets board and room during the season and a small weekly sum for pin money. At the end of the season whatever profits are available are divided equally."⁶ Although this was true, Hambleton's management of Theatre-by-the-Sea differed from the later off-Broadway theatres in one important way: it presented its resident cast along side visiting stars. Those featured included George Macready, Barbara O'Neill, Edith Barrett, Earle Larimore, Selena Royle, and William J. Kelly.

After two seasons at Theatre-by-the-Sea Hambleton transferred his efforts to New York, producing several plays before World War II. The first of these, Stanley Young's Robin Landing, demonstrates that Hambleton's

sensibilities were a touch off-beat for Broadway's taste. The play was a free verse tragedy about the American West. Critics were generally unimpressed, some finding it dull and others refusing to accept the language Young gave his rustic characters.⁷ Burns Mantle, however, felt it was simply misplaced on Broadway. His review stated, "It is rather a pity that a play as fine in texture and as impressive in words as Robin Landing should have to be thrown into the competitive Broadway market and left to succeed or fail by Broadway's standards of entertainment."⁸ As Mantle's remark suggests, Hambleton shared Houghton's desire to offer plays beyond the narrow confines dictated by Broadway. His subsequent productions prior to World War II were more conventional, but after the war he produced three plays for ANTA's Experimental Theatre. Once again he was mounting productions outside the taste of the mainstream. The first of these was the March 1946 production of Arnold Sungaard's The Great Campaign, which baffled the critics. The Variety review observed that "none other than a guide for Cook's Tours could follow the story line consistently" and suggested that the piece was an appropriate choice for the Experimental Theatre because there was nothing commercial about it.⁹

The most controversial of the offerings Hambleton produced for the Experimental Theatre, Charles Laughton's

adaptation of Brecht's Galileo, foreshadowed a casting strategy later to be championed by Hambleton and Houghton at the Phoenix. The Experimental Theatre was supposed to mount works that Broadway would not consider, and certainly a play by Brecht was well within this category. But a problem arose concerning the casting. A letter to the New York Times argued that the use of Laughton ran counter to the Experimental Theatre's purpose and further argued that, in order to land Laughton, the Experimental Theatre was overlooking a better script on the subject, Barrie Stavis's Lamp at Midnight.¹⁰ The response from ANTA was that its Experimental Theatre was not obliged to be an amateur theatre and that experienced actors had as much right to experiment as novices.¹¹ The ANTA choice was approved by several noted critics, and Cheryl Crawford, the chair of Experimental Theatre's executive committee responded sharply, "If we hope to justify the expenditure of money by theatergoers, we cannot offer them Minnie Zilch of Oak Bluffs, Ark., whose only qualification is a burning ambition to become an actress."¹² This insistence upon using the best actors that could be attracted despite the reduced salaries of a non-commercial project was later championed by the Phoenix.

Hambleton and Houghton had been working to subvert the limitations they saw on Broadway, which was showing signs of decline. In talking to Hambleton about his disenchant-

ment, Houghton voiced his concern about what he saw as an alarming trend:

I can't deny that Our Town, and Skin of Our Teeth and Strange Interlude and The Glass Menagerie--all non-traditional in their time--originated on Broadway, and I can't deny they were hits. But if you check out the scene, you'll find the commercial theatre can't support more than three or four such plays a year. In times past, plays opening to mixed notices and with only 'limited appeal'--de Liagre's production of Mad-woman of Chailot, for example--could last for several months. Now they must run for a year or close on Saturday night. This hit-or-flop pattern was ruining us!¹³

Although Broadway's record during the post-war period supports Houghton's assessment of its trends, it had discovered Miller and Williams and showed a few signs of strength. Rodgers and Hammerstein were continuing to produce their long list of musicals, and a tally of only their overwhelming successes during the period suggests how stable the Broadway market was for certain producers with certain vehicles. After the war Rodgers and Hammerstein started with Annie Get Your Gun in 1946 and followed with South Pacific in 1949 and The King and I in 1951. Though this team offered its share of flops and shows that merely made money, their record of three smash hits in six seasons indicates wide acceptance of full-blown musicals with familiar names amongst the production team.¹⁴

Other producers with numerous credits in the period include the Theatre Guild and the Playwrights' Company. The Guild, enjoying an influx of funds from Oklahoma!'s

long run, mounted programs that varied from the challenging (The Iceman Cometh, 1946), to the chancy (Set My People Free, 1948). The Guild also offered productions that seemed certain to return their investment even though they might have had limited box office appeal. For example, in January 1950 they balanced the somewhat speculative choice of Shakespeare's As You Like It with a promotional campaign focused on Kathrine Hepburn's legs. The Guild, though not openly striving to repeat the success of Oklahoma!, was also not willing to drop a bundle on a continuous stream of uncertain vehicles.

The Playwrights' Company was the most active producing organization of the 1940s and 1950s. Formed in 1938 by five of the most prominent playwrights of the period (Robert E. Sherwood, S. N. Behrman, Sidney Howard, Maxwell Anderson, and Elmer Rice) and one lawyer (John F. Wharton), it was intended to provide for the production of new scripts, but only those of its members. This restriction was relaxed somewhat in the late 1940s when the membership dwindled through defections and death and the Playwrights' Company produced scripts by Sidney Kingsley and Garson Kanin.¹⁵ The company formally announced the end of its closed-shop policy in 1951, and by the 1953-54 season they were producing plays by several authors.

No other producers matched the output of the Theatre Guild or the Playwrights Company, but several produced

consistently. Notable among them were Kermit Bloomgarden and Gilbert Miller. Bloomgarden produced four plays by Lillian Hellman during the period as well as Arthur Miller's Death of a Salesman (1949) and The Crucible (1953).¹⁶ Gilbert Miller offered Molnar's The Play's the Thing (1948), Eliot's The Cocktail Party (1950), Anouilh's Ring Around the Moon (1950), and a double bill of Anthony and Cleopatra and Caesar and Cleopatra (1951) that starred Laurence Olivier and Vivian Leigh.

This double bill reflected an Anglophile bias that had been well-established during the nineteenth century. Visiting troupes from England enjoyed warm accolades and crowded houses. The Old Vic Repertory was very well received in 1945-46, with the response to Olivier being particularly strong. When Gilbert Miller brought him back in 1951, the limited engagement of Anthony and Cleopatra and Caesar in Cleopatra, was nearly sold out despite the exorbitant ticket price of \$7.20.¹ In contrast, Broadway showed slight interest in French offerings, especially the Existentialist plays that were the rage of Paris. Sartre received a cool reception from critics. No Exit could manage only 31 performances in 1946, and, although Red Gloves tripled this run in 1948-49 with the help of publicity generated by Sartre's disavowal of the New York production, it still closed in the red.² Anouilh's political tract, Antigone, did not do well either, even

with Katharine Cornell and Cedric Hardwicke in the leads.³ Giraudoux, a more conventional figure, fared only a little better; the posthumous production of his Madwoman of Chaillot in 1949 was a moderate success, but two years later, Ring Around the Moon was a complete failure.⁴

Aside from these trends, Broadway was showing signs of an alarming decline. Post-war optimism was doing little for Broadway investment, and the boom years of the war seemed to be a peak from which Broadway was falling.⁵ Variety's figures for the period indicate a clear and threatening pattern.

Season	Total Productions	Playing Weeks
1947-48	67	1325
1948-49	63	1231
1949-50	59	1156
1950-51	83	1139
1951-52	73	1072
1952-53	54	1012 ⁶

Despite the apparent upturn suggested by the large rise in productions in 1950-51, the steady decline in playing weeks throughout the period is quite telling. It represents a decline in activity of nearly 25% in six seasons.⁷ The jump in productions in 1950-51 in tandem with a continued drop in playing weeks suggests a higher number of flops than in previous seasons, and Variety listed 31 outright flops that season.

The number of productions in 1950-51 is also inflated by the short runs of productions by ANTA and the D'Oyly

Carte Opera Company, which were included in the tally.⁸ In 1950 ANTA had decided to establish itself as a force on Broadway. It acquired the Guild Theatre on Fifty-Second Street, renaming it the ANTA Playhouse, and mounted ten productions in association with Robert Whitehead. The D'Oyly Carte Opera Company visited New York in February and mounted five Gilbert and Sullivan operettas. Both the ANTA series and the D'Oyly Carte were offering a limited engagement of each production--for the D'Oyly Carte, runs were either four or eight performances; for ANTA, runs were one or two weeks.

Though these engagements added variety to Broadway's offerings, they did little to address Broadway's ongoing troubles. The D'Oyly Carte came to New York only periodically and offered no employment to American artists, and ANTA's rise to prominence as a Broadway producer faltered quickly. When it began the project in 1950-51, the board intended to create a permanent repertory on Broadway under Whitehead's management, but the reaction of the critics was cool and the board decided to cut back in the second year, presenting only four productions. In the spring of 1952 ANTA decided to abandon the effort in spite of Whitehead's insistence that such an undertaking needed more time to prove itself.⁹

Production costs were spiraling upward, and in March 1952 Robert Whitehead noted that even crowd-pleasing stars

in productions that garnered strong notices from the critics could not guarantee lines at the box office.¹⁰ In response, producers were making more conservative choices. The Playwrights Company, for example, had slowed its pace of production considerably and its only box office success in two seasons had been a light comedy, The Fourposter.¹¹ Despite the nation's general feeling of accomplishment and optimism, Broadway was becoming more and more a market only for flashy musicals and facile comedies.¹² Norris Houghton characterized the situation in this way: "Times Square has become like a bookshop from whose shelves every title has been cleared except the handful that make up the 'best-seller' list."¹³

Years later, in re-examining the beginning of the Phoenix, Houghton expanded on this idea:

When I went into a bookshop, I was looking for a cookbook, a play just published or out in a new translation, a travel book, or some classic or near classic I'd never tackled. . . . I couldn't believe I was alone in my somewhat offbeat reading tastes. Nor could I believe there weren't other people like me who wanted to expand their theatregoing beyond what the press and the general public had decided was a hit.¹⁴

Hambleton and Houghton launched the Phoenix into the ominous environment of New York, planning to erect a better bookshop on the other side of the tracks. Theirs might be in a seedier neighborhood, but the rent was lower and if all went well they would have the shelf space to display some prized used books. They even wanted to reserve space for a few brash and noisy new paperbacks.

When the Phoenix opened its doors, several other theatres were already in operation in lower Manhattan. Most prominent among them were The Living Theatre and Circle in the Square, and the history of both these theatres has received a good deal of attention. The Circle in the Square production of Summer and Smoke in 1952 is widely accepted as the beginning of off-Broadway,¹⁵ and the history of The Living Theatre has been documented by several books and championed by critics, notably Robert Brustein.¹⁶

An examination of the efforts of these two groups, however, provides only a partial view of post-war production off-Broadway. Of the two, Circle in the Square is the more indicative of the standard off-Broadway operation of the time: a troupe of young hopefuls convinced that they might make it big, just as the Group Theatre had done before them (though the Group Theatre had done their work on Broadway). The people mounting off-Broadway shows had little or no professional experience and usually came from university programs. They offered revivals or recent European works, including plays by Sartre, O'Casey, and Lorca.¹⁷ Circle in the Square, differed from such groups only in its tendency to favor American revivals, and its production of Summer and Smoke was a prominent milestone in off-Broadway's march toward legitimacy; it was not, however, the beginning of off-Broadway.

Long before Circle in the Square became a producing entity in New York, there was a great deal of activity off-Broadway. In 1949 Harold Stern, who had been covering activity there for two years in columns for Back Stage, claimed that there were 130 active companies off-Broadway. The following year, he claimed that 264 groups had registered with him.¹⁸ In reviewing off-Broadway productions, Stern would readily admit that much of what was done was of very low quality and that most of the groups would form and dissolve within weeks, but he emphasized that several groups had gained permanent status, mounting productions in more than one season with intact staffs.

Studio 7 and On-Stage were two notable college groups of the late 1940s that demonstrated such permanence. Studio 7 was formed in the summer of 1949 by a group of students from the Yale School of Drama which included such later notables as Tharon Musser and Robert Brustein. Beginning in July of that year they produced a succession of plays at the Provincetown Theatre. Their repertoire leaned toward recent European works, and in their first two summer seasons they offered Strindberg's The Father, Lorca's The Shoemaker's Prodigious Wife, Pirandello's Naked, and Wedekind's Earth Spirit (translated elsewhere as Lulu).¹⁹ On-Stage was the earliest of the college-inspired ventures to convince critics to pay attention. It was founded in the spring of 1947 by Bob Ramsey and Al

Hurwitz, and its company of actors was comprised of students from a variety of colleges. After playing through the summer, Hurwitz and many of the other members of the company returned to college, but Ramsey stayed on in New York and continued to manage On-Stage by himself. The repertoire for On-Stage included plays from England and Europe such as Heartbreak House and The Creditors and several American revivals, among them Robert Woods' Billy the Kid, Royall Tyler's The Contrast, and Clifton W. Taylor's East Lynne. It performed its role as a showcase effectively, with casts in its earliest productions including names that later became quite recognizable, most notably Gene Saks, Judith Malina, and George Roy Hill.²⁰

In the spring of 1948, Irving Stiber and Melving Goldblatt, both of whom had directed for On-Stage, formed the Interplayers.²¹ Although their name was intended to help characterize the "group's aim of total integration and interplay of actors, directors, designers, musicians, and choreographers," individual cast members, like those of On-Stage, Studio 7, and other off-Broadway groups, were working to be "discovered." The attitude of the performers is characterized by an observation from Betsy Holland, an aspiring actress playing the lead in the Interplayers' 1950 production of The Beggar's Opera, "You never know who views the 'showcase,' . . . After all, it's only a few steps from Carnegie Hall to Broadway. I've got my

fingers crossed that some day soon I'll be invited to make that trip."²² Such a sentiment may seem naive, but the Interplayers had already helped to launch the careers of Jack Palance and Kim Stanley, even though it had only been in operation since the summer of 1948; therefore, Ms. Holland's hopes were based on knowledge of what was possible if unlikely.

These groups offered their seasons in the summer, when Broadway was mounting nothing new and when critics might be lured below Times Square to sample virgin wares. Several of the critics were obliging, although they knew that exposure was the primary purpose of the invitation. Their willingness to ignore the sparseness of production and to focus on the acting helped fuel the performers' hopes. Robert Garland's review of the On-Stage revival of Walter Woods' Billy the Kid is typical:

. . . it's an enchanting adventure in off-Broadway playacting, amateur in the real meaning of the word. The bright and busy, the young and presentable, members of the On-Stage acting company give Billy the Kid their best attention. . . . If I were looking for a promising young player, I'd go to the bottom of The Avenue and look at Mr. McGavin.²³

Enough producers responded to such advertisements to keep the hopes of the off-Broadway players alive. Indeed, critics were not the only ones who might help those looking for advancement. Theatrical agents were also paying attention to all the activity downtown. Walter Kerr, in reviewing Proscenium Productions' The Way of the World,

ended with, "And for casting agents, I'd call it a must."²⁴ The managers as well as the critics were quite open about the purpose of these productions. On-Stage, for example, included in its programs a notice that the players in its productions were the best available from colleges and acting schools around the nation and that their productions were "regularly covered by agents."²⁵

Managements that worked exclusively as showcases were still very much the norm when the Phoenix came onto the scene in 1953. Proscenium Productions, a very active off-Broadway management in the late 1950s, did not form until 1954. Like the Interplayers and On-Stage before it, Proscenium Productions boasted several talented artists who later gained prominence. For example, both Fritz Weaver and Stuart Vaughan worked with Proscenium Productions in its first years. Also, like those managements who preceded it, Proscenium Productions enjoyed favorable press from critics. There were, though, occasional reminders that production standards were less than exemplary. Proscenium Productions enjoyed glowing notices from daily newspapers critics for its September 1954 production of The Way of the World,²⁶ but these were answered a few weeks later when George Jean Nathan flatly dubbed the producers half-wits and offered the following scathing assessment:

One would think that anyone who knew anything at all about drama and the stage would appreciate that the comedy masterpiece calls above everything else for

actors highly trained in polite, sophisticated comedy, whether Restoration or any other kind, and in addition for elegance and style in every detail of its staging. Yet what did the group do? It went about producing the play with acting novices and staged it with all the elegance of a lower East [Side] delicatessen. The result, of course and naturally, was a travesty and a botch, yet the silly producers augmented their silliness by inviting some of the more professional reviewers to pass judgment upon it in the even sillier hope that the reviewers knew as little as they did and would find and report the production a great credit to all concerned.²⁷

Nathan's comments serve as a reminder that not all the critics were willing to play the game of "come-help-us-be-discovered," and his remarks cannot be dismissed as coming from someone uninformed about the purposes of off-Broadway productions. He had been covering off-Broadway work since its earliest efforts and had offered qualified encouragement to one troupe that was not college-bred, New Stages.

New Stages was different from other off-Broadway efforts of the period in that it was conceived and staffed not by recent college graduates but by actors with professional credits in radio. Its purpose, however, was identical to that of the managements that surrounded it: it was a showcase for talent. Like Robert Ramsey of On-Stage, Norman Rose and David Heilwell, the managers of New Stages, offered their productions to draw the attention of critics and Broadway producers to their casts. Critical reception was akin to that afforded other off-Broadway productions in that it acknowledged the purpose to be that of showcasing talent and of recommending that talent to

Broadway. Nathan, for example, singled out Meg Mundy as an actress whose talent overshadowed her lack of experience.²⁸ As a result of the exposure she received from her work with New Stages she went on to a career on Broadway.

As can be seen from the above accounts, during the early 1950s no one was confused about off-Broadway's role in the New York market. Critics, agents, actors, and producers all knew that off-Broadway was merely a stepping stone to Broadway: actors working off-Broadway would either win enough acclaim to move up to Broadway or would accept defeat and find work in another field. This process guaranteed that those who demonstrated the talent necessary to make it to Broadway would find their step up from off-Broadway a dead end. While working off-Broadway, novices would struggle with roles and styles well beyond their grasp, braving such challenges as Shakespeare and Restoration Comedy. After being discovered and reaching Broadway, they found that the development of their artistic abilities was being not merely compromised but ignored. They had achieved success and gained the experience that would allow them to master the roles they had played as amateurs, but once they had "made it," they found that such roles were no longer available to them. With production costs rising, no producer could risk giving them the chance. No one was effectively challeng-

ing this stagnant system until T. Edward Hambleton and Norris Houghton decided to refuse defeat without a fierce fight. Although the New York theatre was ripe for change, it would take over fifteen years for others to embrace Hambleton and Houghton's innovations.

CHAPTER 3

THE FOUNDING OF THE PHOENIX

Before opening Madam Will You Walk? in December 1953, Hambleton and Houghton served notice that although the Phoenix would be located in south Manhattan with the small off-Broadway theatres, it would not be a showcase for new talent.¹ Since both of them had worked on Broadway for more than a decade, neither of them was interested in working with novices, and their age was one significant difference between them and the other off-Broadway managers of the period. When Hambleton and Houghton joined forces to create the Phoenix, they were 41 and 43 years of age respectively and their perspective was necessarily different from that of the recent college graduates who were working off-Broadway at the time. In a real sense, they were moving in the opposite direction of these young hopefuls. Hambleton and Houghton were consciously moving away from Broadway, fully aware of what they were

leaving. The rest of off-Broadway, even the more mature New Stages, was consciously moving toward Broadway, unconcerned with the stagnation they were moving toward. In November 1954 Arthur Gelb wrote an article that characterized off-Broadway's position in the New York market in the following manner, "Off-Broadway is to the theatre what the minor leagues are to baseball. It would be hard to visualize the major league clubs playing ball without having farm teams to train players."² Though this assessment was accurate for everything else happening off-Broadway at the time, it was definitely not true of the Phoenix. If anything, the Phoenix was attempting to create a new major league that would rival Broadway for artistic and critical attention. Gelb, aware of what the Phoenix was doing, made no mention of Hambleton and Houghton's efforts in the article.

Older and more seasoned than the other off-Broadway managers, Hambleton and Houghton were aware of the plight of theatre in New York, and their Broadway experience informed their efforts with the Phoenix. Because of that experience they attempted the possible, lacking the blind faith of those who did not know the profession. They were not radical thinkers but believers in the system. They wanted to stretch the boundaries of the New York's professional theatre market, not to work outside it nor to destroy and recast it.

No single aspect of Hambleton and Houghton's plan set their approach apart from both the Broadway and the off-Broadway of 1953; rather the program as a whole broke new ground and set precedents that others would later imitate. Hambleton and Houghton never produced a manifesto that spelled out their plan as a series of goals to be accomplished. However, a plan can be constructed from an examination the productions mounted and the strategies espoused in the first four seasons of the Phoenix. The major points of the plan were as follows:

1. Budget: The season was to be funded to allow full production of each play chosen. Sets and costumes, though not as lavish or expensively appointed as those of Broadway, would be given careful attention. The downtown location of the Twelfth Street Theatre and low ticket prices induced major concessions from the unions.
2. Financing: The Phoenix accepted the Broadway standard of the limited partnership as a valid means of financing productions. Its partnership, however, was backing an entire season, not a single production.
3. Artistic Staff: The Phoenix would hire artistic staff from the perspective of a Broadway producer. It would pursue any actor it felt would enhance a given production, starting with established stars for leads and working down from there. Directors also would be chosen from those with substantial professional experience. The design team and stage management were to remain intact throughout the season.
4. A season of limited engagements: Each production was to run for six weeks. Any production that proved to have box office potential might be moved uptown; however, the focus was on producing a series of plays each season, not on creating vehicles for Broadway.

5. Staying downtown: Individual productions might move to Broadway in order to replenish the capital lost during a season, but extended runs would be moved elsewhere, keeping the downtown theatre available for the planned program. This was possible because Hambleton and Houghton were not relying on the same casts for each production.
6. Audience: Hambleton and Houghton did not intend to limit their appeal to the audience that frequented the downtown offerings of off-Broadway groups. They intended to tap the mainstream audience that attended Broadway productions.
7. A single producer at one location: Though this is a given with finances being set up as a limited partnership, it is still worth noting separately. Unlike other producers, the Phoenix would mount shows only at the Twelfth Street Theatre; and, unlike other houses, the Twelfth Street Theatre would be used exclusively by the Phoenix.
8. Production values: The Phoenix was interested in providing the most polished, and carefully crafted product possible. Despite budgetary limitations Hambleton and Houghton hoped to come as close as possible to matching Broadway standards.
9. Repertoire: Hambleton and Houghton wanted to provide a widely varied repertoire. They both had catholic tastes, and wanted to offer a variety of plays, ranging from revivals of classics to original works that seemed to warrant production. They felt that with reduced budgets they could afford to mount classics that required large casts that would be prohibitive on Broadway. They also felt they could afford to take an occasional chance on new, untried material.

Hambleton and Houghton were pragmatic about their endeavor and wanted to offer a viable program. Their experience and their awareness of the Broadway market helped them to understand what was and what was not feasible. Realistically, they could not expect actors to commit themselves to a long-range obligation. They chose,

therefore, to limit the time for each production to six weeks of performances. They also realized that establishing a permanent company was not feasible because experienced actors were unlikely to commit themselves to a full season for the salaries the Phoenix could offer. If they offered the salaries needed to retain such actors beyond a short-term commitment, their funds would not last through half the season. Hambleton and Houghton also understood that permanent companies in New York simply did not make economic sense. The latest effort toward such a plan in the 1946-47 season had been a financial disaster: Eva Le Gallienne, Margaret Webster, and Cheryl Crawford's American Repertory Theatre had amassed a \$340,000 debt in a single season.³ Clearly, the American Repertory Theatre's example was not the way to go about offering a viable alternative to Broadway's commercialism.

For their plan to work, Hambleton and Houghton had to keep costs down, and to do so they focused their efforts on two of the largest items in any production budget: salaries and theatre rental. A primary concern for reducing each of these was the location of the theatre. Roger L. Stevens, a real estate entrepreneur from Michigan who had become an prominent producer, was interested in their project and tried to arrange the purchase of the Avon Theatre on West 45th Street.⁴ However, Hambleton and Houghton doubted that they could win concessions from

Equity and the other theatrical unions in a Broadway theatre. They had considered the Irving Place Theatre just north of 14th Street but were unable to acquire it.⁵ Finally they settled on the Twelfth Street Theatre, which suited their needs even though it was in such disrepair that it required nearly \$25,000 for renovations.⁶

Though getting audiences to this remote location later proved to be a problem, it was far enough away from Times Square to justify their claim that they were not a Broadway operation. By choosing a theatre removed from the Broadway district, they won the concessions they sought from the unions, thus addressing the first of the budget items. The choice of the Twelfth Street Theatre also addressed the second item. It cost the Phoenix roughly \$1000 per week for rent, lights, and heat.⁷ Since they controlled their own theatre, they eliminated the percentage that usually went to the theatre owner. Even in the most favorable situation this amounted to 25% of the weekly gross receipts for Broadway theatres.⁸

Hambleton and Houghton accepted certain aspects of Broadway production without question, and primary among these aspects was financing. Unlike Broadway producers, creating a profit was not their aim, but they accepted the financial structure of Broadway production, the limited partnership. This method of financing productions was well-established on Broadway and had been the norm since

the late 1930s when rising production costs had made it impractical for one person or perhaps a few individuals to provide all the backing for a production. Under the limited partnership agreement, the producer becomes the general partner, a member of the partnership who shares in the profits of the enterprise and controls all decisions concerning the production. The limited partners are merely investors who elect to put money into a high risk endeavor. They share in any profits but have no say in artistic choices made during the course of production. Through this method of financing productions the producer retains control of his production.

In contrast to the Phoenix, all the other off-Broadway operations of the period were either sole proprietorships (following the nineteenth-century model) or cooperatives. Both of these methods of financing had their rewards and limitations. In the sole proprietorship, the person in charge had complete control, but full responsibility for the financial backing of a production meant that the manager must either limit the scope of production or have a large source of capital. Off-Broadway managements solved this problem by keeping costs within the means of the manager, and the cost of production in the small houses allowed flexibility for drastic actions by the manager if he chose to exercise his power.

One incident demonstrates how similar such a manager's situation was to that of the powerful actor-managers of last century. In 1950 there was an outcry from the cast and director of On-Stage's production of Heartbreak House, playing at the Bleecker Street Theatre. They demanded that Robert Ramsey, manager of On-Stage, pay them \$30 per week. When he refused, saying he had promised each of them 2% of the profit but that no profits had been realized, they quit en masse, assuming that doing so would win concessions from him. He offered his concessions the following evening: an entirely new cast.⁹

Circle in the Square is an example of a cooperative management of the early off-Broadway movement. Its plan included shared meals and a minimum of fifteen dollars per week paid to each member. Members shared equally in any profits from productions. Until the success of Summer and Smoke they tended to fall far short of their fifteen-dollar goal, averaging only three dollars per week.¹⁰ Of course, with so little income from their efforts on stage, they had to hold other jobs that would allow them time to rehearse and perform. In contrast, Hambleton and Houghton paid a living wage to their actors. The smallest salary for any actor working for the Phoenix was \$55 a week for performances and \$40 a week for rehearsal.¹¹

Hambleton and Houghton also accepted the proportions of Broadway production. In fact, the theatre that they

chose for their venture was comparable to a Broadway house: the Twelfth Street Theatre seated just under 1,200 people. In one night they could play to the number of people that any other downtown theatre needed a whole week to attract. This meant significant expense in filling the stage with scenery and filling the house with customers. The result was unheard of outlays for an off-Broadway house. They began their first season with investments from backers totalling \$125,000 and with a budget of \$25,000 for each production. Though this figure was approximately half the average cost for opening a play on Broadway, it was an astounding sum by off-Broadway standards at the time.¹² Other houses were financing whole seasons for less money. The Interplayers was launched on a total outlay of \$3,500, and the bankroll for Proscenium Productions in 1955-56, its first season, was \$10,000.¹³ Even the professionals of New Stages considered \$30,000 an adequate investment to start their operation.¹⁴ By comparison, the Phoenix' spent nearly this amount on each production. Production costs were \$26,098 for Sing Me No Lullabyes (1954), \$27,686 for The Doctor's Dilemma (1955), and \$28,465 for Right You Are (1956).¹⁵ The expense of running a production at the Phoenix was also well above that of other off-Broadway theatres. For example, the expected weekly operating costs for the Phoenix production of the new musical, Sand-

hog, included \$2,000 for the cast and \$1500 for the stagehands.¹⁶ Thus the weekly budget for cast and crew at the Phoenix was in excess of a budget needed to mount and run an entire production at most of the off-Broadway houses. Broadway may have considered such outlays insignificant, but by off-Broadway's standards the Phoenix was a big business operation.

Furthermore, the off-Broadway ventures of the early 1950s were of no interest to Broadway backers, but in the fall of 1953 Variety's headline on the subject of the Phoenix' financing claimed a "Legit Who's Who in Phoenix Backers."¹⁷ Among the investors for the first year were Mildred Dunnock, Oscar Hammerstein II, William Inge, Elia Kazan, John Latouche, Jo Mielziner, Howard and Marguerite Cullman, Mrs. Donald Oenslager, Joseph Verner Reed, Jack Seidman, Edward Kook, Howard Lindsay, Russel Crouse, Mrs. Sidney Howard, and Beatrice Straight.¹⁸

The Phoenix had Broadway backers not only because Hambleton and Houghton were known to them but also because it was focusing on needs of the artists working on Broadway, not off-Broadway. Broadway was managing to produce only new plays or large musicals. With the number and variety of available roles shrinking, it did not need another downtown theatre attempting to supply it with yet more actors. What Broadway needed was an avenue for the production of revivals of classics. It needed a large

house that could provide full productions of these plays and employ large numbers of actors. Beyond this, actors wanted to have such roles available in order to stretch themselves: it was not only the college novices who needed to be challenged. A new outlet for legitimate production was needed, and whoever provided relief from this stagnation needed to create an environment that helped the actors feel valued. They were not interested in stepping down to the lower production standards of off-Broadway. In a 1951 inquiry into the Broadway's needs, Variety quoted William Hawkins, critic for the World-Telegram: "Better attractions at reasonable tabs are the only hope for a wider theatrical activity. Less talk and less greed for 'success,' more cooperative action, are called for."¹⁹ These were precisely the issues that Hambleton and Houghton wanted to address. They would settle for enough success to keep the doors open, and they were committed to providing the highest caliber productions possible at a top ticket price of three dollars, the same as that being charged by off-Broadway theatres and half the going rate on Broadway.

With the outlays they had projected and with a three dollar top, Hambleton and Houghton needed to attract a far larger audience than did the small off-Broadway houses. To attract enough of an audience to fill such a large house, they could hardly rely only upon the surrounding

community as the other downtown houses did. They again utilized accepted commercial standards when they employed the well-respected Blaine-Thompson advertising firm and kept a continuing account active with them in order to keep the Phoenix name in front of the public. They purchased space in all the daily newspapers, saw to it that Phoenix productions were listed daily in the New York Times ABCs and other similar advertisements, and they invited all the Broadway critics to their openings. The small off-Broadway managements invited the same critics, but the strength of the Phoenix program, along with the amount of publicity it generated (and, no doubt, the list of backers and artists involved in the enterprise) insured that the critics would attend and review each production.

The reviews for the first production, Madam, Will You Walk? by Sidney Howard, were generally favorable, but the critics were at a loss: how could they classify this management? Although Hambleton and Houghton had made it clear in pre-opening publicity that the Phoenix was not a Broadway house, they had also emphasized that it was not off-Broadway either. Nothing existed outside these two markets in 1953, so the critics tended to regard the Phoenix as an extension of Broadway. This was a logical decision. After all, the cast and production staff were all Broadway veterans, and it certainly did not look amateur. In the midst of a rave review, John McClain

wrote: "They have fixed up this tired theatre so that once you get inside you might as well be on 45th Street."²⁰ Given the size of the theatre and the polish of the productions, the Phoenix could not be considered off-Broadway--not by the standards of 1953. The result was that even though Hambleton and Houghton were presenting revivals off-Broadway in limited engagements, the critics saw little difference between the Phoenix and the commercial theatre.

Though most of the critics for the daily newspapers felt the difference between Broadway (including the Phoenix) and off-Broadway was obvious, others were emphasizing the professionalism of off-Broadway. The most vocal advocate for off-Broadway was Harold Stern, who had covered off-Broadway since 1947 for Show Business, a weekly newspaper. In 1949, he wrote that efforts off-Broadway could "range from top-notch professional organizations to the very rankest of amateurs."²¹ In reading the article, however, one finds that the "top-notch" professionals to which he referred were On-Stage and the Interplayers, groups staffed by novices. A year later a Show Business headline shouted: "Off-Broadway Grows; Becomes Big Biz," but the only evidence offered for this statement was that the Interplayers were looking for outside backing.²² An 11 October 1953 headline read, "Producers Eye Off-B'way [sic], Easy Budgets, Critics'

Ok's, Act as Spur." The article claimed that Broadway producers were now investing in off-Broadway shows, but the only producers mentioned were Hambleton and Houghton.

One month later, despite its ongoing campaign to help off-Broadway gain respect as legitimate theatre, Show Business ran a special off-Broadway edition in which the lead article stressed off-Broadway's value as a training ground for actors, directors, and technicians. The article listed about thirty active groups that had provided information about themselves: "The listing published here was gathered by three reporters who spent two weeks on the phone trying to locate the proper people. Undoubtedly, there are many more groups active today who are not listed but at press time we were unable to locate their whereabouts."²³ Given the pro-off-Broadway bias of the articles in Show Business, one would assume that the intention of this qualification was to stress the overwhelming amount of work being done off-Broadway, but in addition (or, perhaps, in contradiction to it) the statement underscores the fly-by-night nature of most the groups producing off-Broadway at the time. In fairness to the publication, it is probably accurate to say that an occasional off-Broadway production demonstrated enough polish and know-how to justify favorable reviews and that Show Business was attempting to encourage such efforts.

Stern's articles stressed the professionalism of the few notable off-Broadway managements such as Interplayers and On-Stage, and his headlines served to catch the attention of his readers and to legitimize off-Broadway productions even if supporting evidence in the articles was scarce. Stern's intentions are not spelled out in the coverage he provided, but it seems reasonable to assume that he was excited by the existence of a budding alternative theatre. His early efforts may have helped to direct the attention of others to the possibility of production off-Broadway. Nevertheless, the details of his coverage belied his headlines, and his claims of professional production off-Broadway in the years prior to the Phoenix must be dismissed as wishful thinking. By the late 1950s, after the Phoenix had made its impact, off-Broadway was finally beginning to attain the level of production Stern had claimed for it as early as 1947. His claims could be considered prophecies, but they cannot be accepted as accurate journalism.

In contrast to the fledgling efforts and the young artists who were the focus of Stern's crusade, the Phoenix program proposed to offer a unique solution to the ills of the stepping-stone system that glued off-Broadway to Broadway. This does not mean, however, that nothing remotely comparable to Hambleton and Houghton's experiment had been attempted in the recent past. Two managements

that pre-date the Phoenix bear a strong enough resemblance to it to demand separate attention. The first of these, New Stages, operated on a much smaller scale than the Phoenix and had been forgotten by the critics when the Phoenix opened in 1953. The second, the City Center theatre program, operated on a much larger scale than the Phoenix and was openly compared to the Phoenix by critics.

New Stages was one of the earliest groups to operate off-Broadway after the war. Though it shared a great deal with the college-bred managements that operated around it, it differed in its approach to financing. Unlike most of the university-related managements, Norman Rose and David Heilwell did not fund their productions through a single source. Their money came from over one hundred backers, all of them professional actors and technicians. Morton Gottlieb, who later became a successful commercial producer, helped to manage the enterprise and stressed that it was a fully professional operation.²⁴ New Stages' announced purpose was to offer scripts that Broadway shied away from and to provide ongoing work for the actors and technicians among its backers.

Like the Phoenix later, New Stages managed to attract a good deal of critical attention. Furthermore, it managed to move its production of The Respectful Prostitute to Broadway in March 1948 and realized enough profit to fund subsequent productions. By May 1949 New

Stages had grossed \$500,000 from six plays, most of this being from The Respectful Prostitute, which it was also planning to move to Chicago with hopes of realizing further profits.²⁵ Clearly, New Stages was structured more carefully and managed with more sophistication than the other off-Broadway groups of late 1940s.

The strategy of using the profit of a transferred production to fund the ongoing downtown effort is directly parallel to Hambleton and Houghton's plans for the Phoenix, and there are more striking similarities. Both managements enjoyed major concessions from the unions.²⁶ Equity granted them Stock contracts, a highly unusual concession for operations within the confines of Manhattan.²⁷ Furthermore, IATSE allowed them to use the same personnel for building crews during the day and running crews for performance at night. Both managements intended to use the capital realized from shareholders to mount a season of plays for limited runs and to choose vehicles that Broadway would not consider profitable. Aside from these similarities, however, there were several important differences.

Though both were financed as partnerships, the funding practices of New Stages and the Phoenix were markedly different. New Stages had over one hundred backers, but Rose and Heiwell maintained a controlling 40% interest in the endeavor and functioned as the company's managing direc-

tors.²⁸ However, this structure created problems for them by the summer of 1948 when shareholders objected to the power wielded by Rose and Heilwell and insisted in having more say in artistic decisions.²⁹ Rose and Heilwell, though objecting that they had never intended the operation to be a cooperative, did divest themselves of one quarter of their shares. By November 1949 they had resigned.

Hambleton and Houghton avoided such conflicts by using the more traditional funding base of the limited partnership, under which backers are not at liberty to challenge management's artistic decisions.³⁰ The majority of the investors in the limited partnership were not artists, but investors with a history of backing commercial productions who expected the managers to make the decisions. By retaining the Broadway-tested means of raising money, Hambleton and Houghton opened themselves up to the criticism that they were following the entrepreneurial methods of Broadway producers, but they also avoided the dilemma that had earlier troubled Rose and Heilwell, who found themselves in a delicate situation. They were obligated to cast their productions from the actors investing in the enterprise, and this meant that their employees were also their primary financial resource.³¹

Aside from this difference in financing, the Phoenix and New Stages differed in three other areas: casting,

rehearsal scheduling, and the amount of emphasis given to technical production. Although New Stages cast its productions from the ranks of professional actors, those actors came with experience on radio, not the stage. The critics who reacted favorably to the acting during the first season of New Stages often mentioned that the actors did well despite their lack of experience on stage.³² The Phoenix, in contrast, intended from the very beginning to hire the most accomplished and most experienced stage actors available.³³

New Stages rehearsed between midnight and four o'clock in the morning in order to allow cast members to earn money at their regular jobs in radio, television, and modeling during the day.³⁴ In contrast, the Phoenix paid actors for rehearsal and generally rehearsed a full four weeks for each production with a standard daytime schedule. Similarly, the Phoenix devoted much more attention and expense to its physical production than New Stages. In fact, one reason that costumes and sets were rarely mentioned in reviews of New Stages productions is that there simply were not any sets or costumes worth mentioning.³⁵ The critics, understanding the purpose of the venture, avoided writing about those aspects of production that were being ignored (or at least downplayed) by everyone involved.

Although New Stages claimed to have goals similar to those later embraced by the Phoenix, the methods they practiced suggest that their productions worked far better as showcases for acting talent than they did as an alternative to Broadway. The shareholders' demand that casting be restricted to membership further suggests that their investment was not intended to set up an alternative theatre that was an end in itself. Clearly, if the management wanted to stage the best possible production of a chosen script, the strongest cast available would not come from actors whose experience was limited to radio. Despite apparently substantial similarities to the Phoenix plan, New Stages did not prefigure the choices that Hambleton and Houghton were to make five years later.

If any critics saw the similarities between New Stages and the Phoenix, none bothered to mention them. The City Center theatre program, on the other hand, seemed eminently comparable to Hambleton and Houghton's venture, and critics lost no time in identifying them. Though pointing to some differences between the two, Henry Hewes drew attention to the similarities between the two managements in his review of Madam, Will You Walk?³⁶ The most pointed comparison was offered by George Jean Nathan, who noted:

The Phoenix with its miscellaneous planned schedule of plays domestic and foreign and occasional revivals of the classics doesn't seem to differ markedly from

the City Center idea. True, that isn't altogether a bad idea, but if theatre lovers can get it at exactly the same price a step or two from Broadway it isn't easy to figure out why in the long run they should travel a considerable distance to get it elsewhere.³⁷

Nathan's claim that the Phoenix was merely a clone of the City Center warrants some attention. Though the City Center project in toto was a far larger undertaking than the Phoenix, it bore a strong resemblance to the Phoenix, especially during the early 1950s.

City Center's repertoire had varied a good deal since its inception. In its inaugural season of 1943-44, City Center offered three revivals: Rachel Cruthers' Susan of God, Sidney Kingsley's The Patriots, and Our Town. In 1944-45 it presented five revivals: Little Women, The Cherry Orchard, You Can't Take It with You, Othello, and the musical comedy Carmen Jones. But in its third season, City Center managed only one "new" production: The Tempest. Aside from this it repeated its productions of Little Women and Carmen Jones. This production of The Tempest shared one thing with all the productions offered to date by the City Center: it was a remount of a relatively recent box office hit. Furthermore, City Center was not actually producing any of these productions. Strictly speaking, it was a rental house with no rent, because each production was being mounted at City Center by a different Broadway producer, with the producer giving City Center a percentage of the gross and with City Center

paying the City of New York a rental of 1 1/2% of the gross.

This shortcoming was addressed in 1947-48, when, with José Ferrer and Richard Whorf as featured performers, City Center produced a short season of four revivals in the winter and another of three revivals in the spring. This season's repertoire marked a drastic departure from the City Center tradition. It featured seldom-mounted classics mixed with contemporary pieces of little box office appeal. The winter season offered Rip Van Winkle, Volpone, and Patrick Hamilton's Angel Street; the spring season was The Alchemist, S.S. Glencairn, and The Insect Comedy. Of these choices, only Angel Street was a recent commercial vehicle, and only Volpone had outside backing.³⁸ After a return to its former policy of renting to outside productions in the 1948-49 season,³⁹ City Center established the New York City Theatre Company and announced Maurice Evans as its artistic director. Although the 1949-50 season, like previous seasons, relied upon recent successes such as Emlyn Williams' The Corn Is Green, Brigadoon, and A Streetcar Named Desire, City Center was again offering revivals mounted in-house, not by outside producers. For several years thereafter (including 1953-54, the season in which the Phoenix opened), City Center offered substantially the same type of program. The continued reliance upon recent commercial

hits became most apparent in the 1953-54 season, under the artistic leadership once again of José Ferrer.⁴⁰ Given this history of production, it seems that Nathan's assessment of the Phoenix as just another City Center was backed by considerable evidence, especially considering the Phoenix' first play.

The Phoenix was apparently paying attention to commercial appeal. Although Madame, Will You Walk? had never been mounted on Broadway, it fell short by the slimmest of margins. It was slated for arrival in New York with George M. Cohan in the lead, under the auspices of the Playwrights' Company in 1939, but closed in Baltimore.⁴¹ With this history in its background, the first play offered by the Phoenix does seem well within the scope of choices that had been made by City Center. Beyond this first choice, however, Nathan's claim lacks credence. The Phoenix had already announced its intention of mounting Coriolanus as its second production--hardly a safe choice, and certainly not a recent box office success. Furthermore, the managing directors were maintaining firm control of artistic choices and had hired no highly visible artistic director such as Evans or Ferrer to guarantee a certain following.

Aside from differences in choice of repertoire, there were more substantial differences between the two managements. Though both the Phoenix and City Center mounted

shows for limited runs under Stock contracts with Equity, City Center productions ran for only two weeks, one third the run afforded each production by the Phoenix. This may seem insignificant, but a consideration of the time involved to mount and run each production shows that Phoenix productions were given more careful attention than were those at the City Center: rehearsal periods were twice as long at the Phoenix. Moreover, the financial structures of the two managements were exact opposites. The Phoenix was ostensibly arranged as a profit-making limited partnership; yet, it never really expected to perform the basic function of a commercial house, making money. Norris Houghton was publicly admitting this as early as 1956.⁴² The City Center Theatre program operated non-profit, but for the first several years of its operation it made money and subsidized the opera and symphony programs of the City Center. In fact, Ferrer's crowd-pleasing 1953-54 season was expected to net \$100,000 for City Center.⁴³

Although City Center and New Stages resembled the Phoenix in several superficial ways, neither had broken new ground that would redefine New York's theatrical market. For example, Equity offered its Stock contract to City Center and New Stages because their production strategies fit within the confines of the contract. It had no contract that fit the Phoenix strategy and offered

a Stock contract because nothing more appropriate existed. The year after the Phoenix opened, Equity began to work on revisions of the contract to address the flexibility that the Phoenix program demanded.⁴⁴ The result of this effort was the League of Regional Theatres (LORT) contract that was finally negotiated in 1966, thirteen years after Hambleton and Houghton had launched their experiment at the Twelfth Street Theatre.⁴⁵

Although Hambleton and Houghton's plan set unique precedents for off-Broadway production, to claim that there was no legitimate theatre activity off-Broadway when the Phoenix opened its doors in December 1953 would be inaccurate.⁴⁶ Hambleton and Houghton were not working in a vacuum. New Stages and City Center had preceded the Phoenix by several years, and a small burst of activity had preceded the Phoenix' emergence on the scene: the Theatre de Lys at 131 Christopher Street had opened in the summer of 1953 with a series of plays produced by Terese Hayden, and Howard Da Silva and Arnold Perl had opened The World of Sholom Aleichem at the Barbizon-Plaza Theatre at Fifty-Eighth Street and Sixth Avenue that fall. Both of these bore some resemblance to the Phoenix, but, unlike the Phoenix, neither had a plan of operation that would allow them to stay afloat long enough to have any impact on the theatrical market of New York. Of the two managements, that of William de Lys was by far the more

ambitious, and it bore some resemblance to the Phoenix program.

William de Lys, a thirty-six-year-old Coloradan with an enigmatic background and a considerable reserve of cash, arrived in Manhattan in 1951, planning to take the New York theatre by storm.⁴⁷ Vernon Rice, a critic who encouraged the early off-Broadway movement, outlined de Lys's plan in the 13 June 1952 New York Post. De Lys had transformed the Hudson Theatre from a dilapidated movie house into a gem of a small theatre with 299 seats and a fully equipped stage. He renamed it the Theatre de Lys. During the remodeling process he sank nearly \$100,000 into the project, all of it being his money. He announced an opening date for October 1952 and planned to operate not just a theatre but a miniature cultural arts complex with a yearly schedule of ten plays, five ballets, seven concerts, and twenty children's shows. De Lys planned to hire only union labor and claimed that, regardless of reviews or audience reaction, each play would run for 30 days and then tour communities that Broadway tours ignored. The first season's repertoire was to open with John Huston's Frankie and Johnnie and was to include Schnitzler's La Ronde, Koestler's Twilight Bar, Wilde's Salomé, a musical adaptation of East Lynne, and two new plays. De Lys planned to make his operation a theatre club in which a membership fee of two dollars allowed one

to purchase tickets for any performance. More expensive memberships of \$150 and \$250 included full subscriptions and various glamorous perks.⁴⁸

This plan, despite its grandiose posture, was akin to that later devised by Hambleton and Houghton. Like them, de Lys intended to move legitimate theatre downtown immediately, and he saw the value of offering a season of limited runs instead of mounting one production with the hope of its being a hit. He claimed to be a veteran of the circus and did not want to work with amateur show people, and he was not interested in patiently building respect from critics by nurturing young casts into maturity. The problem for de Lys, a novice to production in New York, was that he had no financial plan to see his vision through. His career as a New York producer began with the black tie opening of Frankie and Johnnie on 28 October 1952; it ended with the closing curtain. The critics were scathing and indignant.⁴⁹ One of the kinder remarks came from John McClain, who wrote, "I can't figure out how anyone with the slightest professional aspirations in the entertainment world could have gone along with Frankie and Johnny."⁵⁰ De Lys withdrew the play and promised he would make amends with his next production, Sodom, Tennessee by Howard Richardson and William Berney, a selection that had not appeared on his list of announced plays.⁵¹ This production never materialized,

and, more quickly than he had appeared on the New York scene, de Lys disappeared amidst rumors of financial mismanagement and tax fraud. Within months his theatre was advertising its availability to anyone who could pay the rent.⁵²

The Theatre de Lys was in operation again the following summer, but it remained a rental house through the end of the decade. Various producers rented the space until Carmen Capalbo and Stanley Chase opened The Threepenny Opera in 1955. This, true to de Lys's vision, was a fully professional production. Though Capalbo, a relative newcomer, directed, the cast featured Lotte Lenya as Jenny and Scott Merrill as Macheath. Threepenny was a rousing success and ran for seven years at the de Lys.⁵³

The other legitimate production off-Broadway in 1953 was The World of Sholom Aleichem. Unlike William de Lys, the producers for this play had a rather simple plan, but like de Lys, their foray into legitimate off-Broadway production was short-lived and consisted of only two productions. Arnold Perl had written three one acts based on the stories of Sholom Aleichem. He and Howard Da Silva believed the plays were marketable (a potential hit) as a single evening's entertainment, but they chose to venture less money on the production than Broadway would have demanded. They incorporated as Rachel Productions, raised \$19,500, enticed such well-known players as Jack Gilford

and Morris Carnovsky, and opened at the Barbizon-Plaza Theatre in the spring of 1953.⁵⁴ They managed only a short run, but reopened in the fall to find their faith repayed by a run of 306 performances. Encouraged by their success, they took an option on a new musical by Earl Robinson and Waldo Salt with a rather unsavory title, Sandhog, a hard-hitting exposé of the working and living conditions faced by New York's immigrant laborers in the nineteenth century.⁵⁵ In assessing production costs, Perl and Da Silva realized that Sandhog would require far more capital to produce than The World of Sholom Aleichem. The latter had a cast of twelve, but Sandhog would require twice that number as well as an orchestra and extensive sets. Since the show was too big for the Barbizon-Plaza, they needed a larger house.⁵⁶ Knowing that the cost on Broadway would be prohibitive, they contacted Hambleton and Houghton to inquire about the possibility of joint production.⁵⁷

The outlay for Sholom Aleichem had been quite substantial by off-Broadway standards in 1953--not as substantial as the \$40,000 that Hambleton and Houghton put up for Madam, Will You Walk?, but at least three times the amount usually invested in an off-Broadway show. Still Perl and Da Silva felt full production was essential if they were to attract experienced actors such as Carnovsky and Gilford to their project. Clearly, Da Silva and Perl's

approach was akin to that of Hambleton and Houghton. A contract was drawn up during the summer, and the Phoenix and Rachel Productions each raised \$30,000 for a joint production of Sandhog. It opened to mixed reviews in November 1954 as the second production of the Phoenix season and ran for its scheduled 48 performances.

After this venture, like William de Lys, Howard Da Silva and Arnold Perl disappeared from the ranks of off-Broadway producers as quickly as they had emerged. Perl continued to write, and Da Silva continued to act, but neither figured further in the development of the off-Broadway market after Sandhog closed.⁵⁸ The burst of activity that had accompanied the Phoenix' opening downtown had come to an end.

With the de Lys running Threepenny Opera through the seasons and Rachel Productions gone two seasons after it formed, the Phoenix continued to carry the torch against the hit-or-flop approach that prevailed throughout the rest of the decade both off and on Broadway. Those working off-Broadway struggled to legitimize themselves by climbing uptown one-by-one, or occasionally several at a time, in a successful production. This was the accepted way to establish oneself, by "graduating" to the big time.

Circle in the Square had legitimized itself in this way. It followed its successful run of Summer and Smoke with a warmly received production of Alfred Hayes' The

Girl on the Via Flaminia in February 1954. When the theatre was closed for fire code violations, Mann and Quintero moved the production uptown, where it enjoyed a respectable run. Turning their attention to O'Neill, they mounted an even more popular revival, The Iceman Cometh, which opened in May 1956 on Bleecker Street. The following season, Circle in the Square made the leap to Broadway, producing Long Day's Journey into Night to critical acclaim. Certainly the success and the artistic merit of Circle in the Square's productions helped to improve the image of off-Broadway in the eyes of the public and of the critics.

Aside from this, off-Broadway continued to play its minor league role to Broadway even though certain vocal producers were trying to impress upon the city that the work they were doing was professional and worthy of the same consideration given to Broadway. This effort to gain legitimate status was a continuation of a 1949 development in which five off-Broadway managements formed their own league in an effort to gain permission to use union actors without paying them.⁵⁹ In 1955 several of the off-Broadway managements formed the Off-Broadway Association, Inc. in order to negotiate with unions, and in February they sent out a press release that was intended to legitimize their operations. The release outlined five major points: (1) their "top personnel" were profes-

sionals; (2) they were commercial, for-profit ventures, not connected to educational institutions or otherwise subsidized; (3) casts were paid, most being union members; (4) most groups among the membership were organized companies with permanent staffs; (5) they were reviewed by regular New York critics.⁶⁰

These points were being made to stress off-Broadway's legitimacy; yet, the fact that the managers felt such points had to be made tells a good deal about the impression that others had of the off-Broadway theatre of 1955. If off-Broadway had become professional, why would it be necessary to keep stressing the point? The battle for recognition continued, with the managers trying to gain the respect of main stream critics and audiences but also trying to avoid the attention of the unions, which logically paid a great deal of attention to claims of "professionalism." Certainly the claims of the Off-Broadway Association had some merit. Among its officers were Theodore Mann and Lucille Lortel, both of whom were responsible for some of off-Broadway's best moments.⁶¹

Claims that New York's two theatrical venues were hard to distinguish in terms of quality of production by the mid-1950s were coming from more disinterested sources than off-Broadway producers. Garrison P. Sherwood, for example, began his "Off-Broadway" section for The Best Plays of 1956-1957 with this comment:

Where to draw the line between Off Broadway and Broadway is becoming more difficult each year. It is now often a matter of geography rather than professionalism. Off Broadway is an established feature in New York life. This is becoming evident in the publicity given the better productions; even the "ads" are mixed right in with the Broadway offerings, and the reviewers subject the plays to far less easy-going and far more Broadway-like standards. Off Broadway's status has been given a real boost by the fact that the Circle in the Square group--Leigh Connell, Theodore Mann and José Quintero--are now represented on Broadway with O'Neill's Long Day's Journey into Night, which won both the Critics' Circle Award and the Pulitzer Prize for the year. Add to this the fact that Carmen Capalbo and Stanley Chase, whose production of Threepenny Opera has had a fabulous run at the Theater de Lys, also set up on Broadway by taking the Bijou Theatre and presenting, first, Graham Greene's The Potting Shed and later Eugene O'Neill's A Moon for the Misbegotten.⁶²

It is worth noting the method Sherwood chooses to defend his claim: by stressing that, like Broadway, off-Broadway can accomplish long runs and that key people have moved successfully up to Broadway from it. He does not mention any veterans who had chosen to move down to off-Broadway in order to experiment because the Phoenix was the only theatre attracting such actors, and it was not until later that movement away from Broadway would be accepted or attempted by more than a few.

Claims such as Sherwood's about the professionalism of off-Broadway should be balanced by consideration of other assessments that have not received as much exposure.

Viveca Lindfors was one of the few stars who did accept such movement away from Broadway. She had appeared in the Phoenix production of the double bill, Miss Julie and The

Stronger, in 1956. In 1958 she was interviewed while she was appearing off-Broadway at the York Theatre in Maxwell Anderson's The Golden Six, one of the earliest off-Broadway forays by an established playwright. Her opinion about the work being done off-Broadway--a season after Sherwood's comments--was quite pointed:

There are too many young people. Yes, young actors must learn. But they should not appear in New York. New York should be something special for the theatre.

OffBroadway [sic] is like a playground now. Everybody is having fun and not enough work. [sic] Not enough thought. I go to see a play, and I ask myself, 'How could this play get good reviews?' They try to do something that would be very difficult for a great director, a great actor. It is too big. Too complicated.

When asked about the Phoenix she said: "It is more professional. . . . It is not so much like a college. I suppose I shouldn't make generalities. I haven't seen everything. It just isn't possible. But I try to see as much as I can."⁶³

The stark contrast between these two assessments of the off-Broadway market in the mid 1950s need not be judged as contradictory. It is reasonable to assume that most of the work done off-Broadway in 1958 was strikingly amateur but that the best work being done by a handful of managements was on a par with the polish of Broadway. The fact that Viveca Lindfors was herself working off-Broadway suggests that the Phoenix pattern of reverse flow--veteran artists being lured away from Broadway and films--

was beginning to take hold and would eventually attract playwrights, producers, designers, as well as actors. The Phoenix, of course, was the prime example of the reverse flow, but traces of activity surfaced in the wake of the Phoenix.⁶⁴

The first legitimate producers to show a willingness to move off-Broadway were Jerome Friedman and Clinton Wilder, both previously associated with the Phoenix. Friedman had co-produced the Broadway re-production of Saint Joan in 1956; Wilder was one of the original Phoenix backers and an associate producer for the Phoenix' 1955 production of Six Characters in Search of an Author. In 1958 at the Rooftop Theatre on East Houston Street, Friedman produced Ulysses in Nighttown, an adaptation from James Joyce's Ulysses conceived by Burgess Meredith and written by Oliver Saylor and Marjorie Barkenstein. With this unorthodox vehicle, Friedman and Meredith managed to entice Zero Mostel downtown. It was not until 1961 that Wilder, along with Richard Barr, began producing plays by Albee, Beckett, Jack Richardson, and others at different downtown theatres. The following year Wilder and Barr took over the Cherry Lane Theatre and continued to offer similar bills until the late 1960s. Barr's decision to work off-Broadway can be seen as a major step for the flow of talent away from Broadway. He came down to the Cherry Lane, trailing a string of Broadway directing credits

behind him. In 1962 even Kermit Bloomgarden tested the off-Broadway waters with the London import Moon on a Rainbow Shawl by Errol John. The cast included Vinette Carol from the London production and actors whose talent had been honed off-Broadway--the most prominent being James Earl Jones, and Cecily Tyson. Bloomgarden's decision to venture off-Broadway and the production's mixture of uptown and downtown talent indicates how far the New York market had come in accepting off-Broadway on the terms defined by the Phoenix in 1953.

Lucille Lortel cannot be ignored in this discussion. She is widely recognized as a primary force behind the off-Broadway movement, but her productions at the Theatre de Lys and at other off-Broadway houses were preceded by the Phoenix. Her first involvement in off-Broadway production was as an associate producer for the second mounting of Threepenny, which opened after she had purchased the de Lys in 1954. Her second off-Broadway production came in 1956, the same year that she began the ANTA Matinee Theatre Series at the de Lys.⁶⁵ Like so much of what happened off-Broadway in the late 1950s, this celebrated series was also prefigured by the Phoenix. The ANTA series is almost a mirror image of the "Sideshow" launched by the Phoenix in 1954.⁶⁶ The Phoenix Sideshows featured new works and seldom produced classics which Hambleton and Houghton presented on Monday evenings for

single performances. The artists involved varied from the highly accomplished to the unknown. By the time the Lortel's ANTA series started with Siobhan McKenna's Hamlet, the Phoenix had offered nine Sideshows, the most prominent among them being a highly acclaimed rendering of John Webster's The White Devil and the ambitious The Mother of Us All, a combined reading-concert written by Gertrude Stein and Virgil Thomson.⁶⁷ Although the Sideshows were discontinued when the Phoenix moved from the Twelfth Street Theatre in the early 1960s,⁶⁸ they prefigured the ANTA series which bore a striking resemblance to them in format, repertoire, and schedule.

Casting is another major aspect of the Phoenix plan which others eventually followed. From the beginning, Hambleton and Houghton wanted to attract the best possible actors by offering them a chance to work away from the box office pressures of Broadway. They were dangling two carrots: freedom to explore roles that Broadway could not offer and a limited run that would not jeopardize the potential for the more lucrative work provided by Broadway and films. An added benefit of this plan was that with major acting talents, they could also entice top directors. An examination of the people attracted to the plan indicates that the idea was fruitful. The following is a partial list for the first five seasons:

Season one (1953-54): Hume Cronyn and Jessica Tandy opened the Phoenix with Cronyn's adaptation of Madam,

Will You Walk?, which Sidney Howard had left unfinished at his death. Both John Houseman and Robert Ryan left Hollywood to do Coriolanus, and Montgomery Clift returned to the stage for the first time since 1945 in The Sea Gull.

Season two (1954-55): Beatrice Straight accepted the lead in a new play, Sing Me No Lullaby, by Robert Ardrey; Roddy McDowall and Geraldine Fitzgerald played the leads in The Doctor's Dilemma; and Oscar Homolka directed and starred in The Master Builder.

Season three (1955-56): Tyrone Guthrie directed Six Characters in Search of an Author; Viveca Lindfors was featured in Miss Julie and The Stronger; and Michael Redgrave directed Uta Hagen and Luther Adler in A Month in the Country.

Season four (1956-57): Siobhan McKenna starred in Saint Joan; McDowall returned for Diary of a Scoundrel; and Eric Bentley directed Uta Hagen in his adaptation of The Good Woman of Setzuan.

Season five (1957-58): Guthrie returned to direct Mary Stuart with Irene Worth and Eva Le Gallienne in the leads, and Herbert Berghof directed June Havoc in The Infernal Machine⁶⁹

As the the above list demonstrates, the Phoenix consistently used top talents despite the low salaries it offered; yet, when critics discussed developments in casting by off-Broadway theatres, they did not include the Phoenix in their thoughts. As with other aspects of production, in casting the Phoenix was considered to be in a class by itself. While the Phoenix' ongoing employment of such actors was being ignored, use of established talent by David Ross at his Fourth Street Theatre was heralded as a striking breakthrough. In 1956, when Ross managed to attract Franchot Tone, Signe Hasso, George Voskovec, and Clarence Derwent to his production of Uncle

Vanya, one response read, "When a Hollywood star opens a show on Broadway it's news. But when a brace of them plus a Broadway luminary and a video nova open in a play, off-Broadway, it's a revolution--especially when that play is a tenuosity by Chekhov."⁷⁰ Though the critics were impressed by Ross's ability to lure such top names to this production, it is pertinent to note that he managed this casting coup after the Phoenix had already confirmed that downtown theatres were acceptable venues for established actors. Furthermore, his success in landing such casts was quite spotty. His next production was The Sea Gull, to which he was able to lure Jacob Be-Ami, Betty Field, and Sheppard Strudwick. Thereafter Ross was lucky if he found a single star willing to play a lead backed by casts with little professional experience.⁷¹

Ross has received a good deal of credit for pursuing developments that had actually been pioneered by the Phoenix. Although no documentation suggests that he had consciously followed the lead of the Phoenix in attracting stars off-Broadway for salaries that were ludicrous by commercial standards,⁷² the fact remains that he did so only after the pattern had been well-established by the Phoenix. He was using Chekhov as a ploy to entice such casts, but the Phoenix had done the same thing in 1954 with its production of The Sea Gull, the cast of which included Judith Evelyn, Montgomery Clift, George Voskovec,

Sam Jaffe, Maureen Stapleton, June Walker, Mira Rostova, Will Geer, and Kevin McCarthy.

Ross's casting strategy and Lortel's ANTA Matinee Series suggest that other producers were quick to embrace certain of Hambleton and Houghton's innovations, but producers were much less eager to adopt the Phoenix' commitment to limited runs. Only the Phoenix was offering seasons of plays and working against the hit-or-flop pattern that ruled both the Broadway and off-Broadway markets.⁷³ Indeed, it took over a decade for another management in New York to accept the idea of offering a season instead of running each production until it was bled of all its revenue. Hambleton and Houghton's answer to the long run was a season of limited engagements. Though it may have seemed idiocy to the commercial producers to whom Hambleton and Houghton were always compared, the Phoenix would close or move a successful production to make room for the next one they had scheduled. At the Phoenix an "extended run" meant that a given play might run two weeks beyond its planned schedule, not two years. A strong test of Hambleton and Houghton's commitment to this policy came in the first year. Their third show, John Latouche and Jerome Moross's The Golden Apple, clearly had hit potential. The musical was a reworking of the Trojan War that placed the characters in the American Northwest after the Spanish-American

War. Critics were unanimous in their praise, finding the brash wit of the proceedings refreshing and smartly portrayed.⁷⁴ Among the chorus shouting "Bravo!" was William Hawkins, who wrote, "For the Phoenix The Golden Apple is an out and out triumph. It should jam the place as long as it stays."⁷⁵ It stayed for six weeks, its previously defined run, and promptly made room for the next production. Holding firm with their objective to keep shows turning over, Hambleton and Houghton moved The Golden Apple uptown and opened The Sea Gull on schedule.

After standing firm with the plan of limited runs in their first season, Hambleton and Houghton continued to follow the same pattern in the years that followed. Of the thirty productions mounted in the first five seasons, only four besides The Golden Apple were extended past their announced run: Phoenix '55, a review that ended the second season, ran 94 performances; Six Characters in Search of an Author, the second production of the 1955-56 season, was extended two weeks; Saint Joan, the first production of the 1956-57 season, returned for two weeks in December after closing in late October; and Mary Stuart, the first production in the 1957-58 season, was extended one week. From 1953 until 1958 the Phoenix was the only theatre in New York committed to offering seasons. No other management in the city, either on or off Broadway, considered producing a season.⁷⁶

Mounting seasons instead of individual productions precluded profit, and no other management was willing to accept this. Even the most prominent off-Broadway managements were mounting single productions, and part of what proved the validity of these productions was their staying power. Circle in the Square held the off-Broadway record for long runs of straight plays. It continued to mount plays and run them as long as possible throughout the 1960s and did not offer a season of plays until 1972, when it moved uptown to its new location.⁷⁷ At the Fourth Street Theatre, David Ross also mounted each of his plays, planning to have it run as long as possible. He started by announcing a cycle of Chekhov's great works, but he had no timeframe for completing the cycle, and he offered only eleven productions in his seven-year tenure at the Fourth Street Theatre. The Theatre de Lys, of course, ran Threepenny through the entire period.

Though the long runs of critically acclaimed productions mounted at the de Lys, Circle in the Square, and the Fourth Street may have helped legitimize off-Broadway in the eyes of the public, these productions offered far less stimulus for development of theatrical talents than did the seasons offered by the Phoenix. Although a long run keeps a specific pool of actors employed, it does nothing to stretch them artistically, and it offers no further employment for directors or designers. Circle in the

Square and the Fourth Street Theatre would provide work for one director (always José Quintero at the former and always David Ross at the latter) and one design team an average of less than twice a year. The de Lys offered no work for directors or designers during the period. By contrast, from 1953 until 1958 the Phoenix provided work for seven playwrights, over twenty directors, and almost as many designers.⁷⁸ Clearly then, by choosing to offer seasons instead of long runs, Hambleton and Houghton were creating more work for theatre artists than any other off-Broadway management.

Throughout the 1950s Hambleton and Houghton continued their single-handed campaign against the long runs that had contributed to Broadway's stagnation. Today every major institutional off-Broadway theatre offers a season of plays to which it sells subscriptions: in 1953 only one did.⁷⁹ The idea was so foreign to producers that no other management in New York City embraced this policy for over ten years. The first management to join the Phoenix in offering a season of plays was the Lincoln Center Repertory Company in 1963. Three years later the American Place Theatre also offered a season of four plays. Then in the next several seasons the Negro Ensemble Company, Joseph Papp's Public Theatre, and the Roundabout Theatre joined the ranks of off-Broadway managements offering seasons. During the 1970s most of the institutional

theatres of the city came to embrace the structure that the Phoenix had chartered in 1953.

When Garrison P. Sherwood capsulized the off-Broadway season of 1954-55, he said of the Phoenix, "It is without question Off Broadway geographically and spiritually but it uses Broadway talent."⁸⁰ Unfortunately the Phoenix' spiritual ties to off-Broadway were soon forgotten by the critics. Even in the first season, critics were openly claiming that the Phoenix was nothing but Broadway downtown.⁸¹ Until the Phoenix moved into smaller quarters in 1961,⁸² the theatre annuals, Best Plays and Theatre World, treated it as part of the commercial theatre. As the rest of off-Broadway strove to catch up to the standards and practices set by the Phoenix, critics noted the accomplishments of many managements but made no note of their precursor.

It would be foolish to argue that the Phoenix single-handedly redefined off-Broadway. Obviously countless forces interacted to bring off-Broadway from its fledgling moments in 1947 to what it became in the late 1960s. But much of what the Phoenix did preceded the strikingly similar practices that were embraced years or even decades later by other managements.

Perhaps no management consciously modeled itself after the Phoenix. If any did do so, research has certainly uncovered no evidence of it. But in its first five years

of operation the Phoenix proved that the mainstream, uptown audience would attend off-Broadway; it proved that New York did have room for an alternative legitimate theatre away from Broadway; it proved that it was possible to offer a season of plays instead of accepting the stagnation of the long run; it proved that an institutional theatre could compete with Broadway and Hollywood for the talents of the most highly respected theatre artists in the nation. It proved that the way it chose to operate in 1953 was the way of the future. Although critics and historians have failed to take notice, the Phoenix was the crucible for all of these developments.

CHAPTER 4

BEYOND THE REDEFINITION OF OFF-BROADWAY

Hambleton and Houghton achieved substantial success in the first five years of the Phoenix but also endured myriad setbacks: box office receipts had been sporadic; critical response quickly ran from warm to impatient; the challenge of mounting seasons of plays resulted in several weak productions; and the size of the theatre hindered play choice.¹ Despite this list of troubles, they had managed to keep the doors open, and many strategies that they practiced were reflected in the management of later off-Broadway houses. Their unique method of co-management was to last until the 1959-60 season in which Hambleton was left to lead the Phoenix on his own.² Together they had created a theatre that functioned effectively as a catalyst in redefining off-Broadway. Having accomplished this, they continued to explore new paths that others would follow.

Three of these paths are examined in this chapter: the conversion to nonprofit status, the first attempt to develop a resident company, and the generation of outreach programs to attract student audiences. From 1957 to 1971 Hambleton's experiments grew bolder and in some ways less successful in opening new markets for theatrical production. During these years the Phoenix was among the first theatres in the nation to establish a subscription audience,³ to embrace nonprofit production, to attract private foundation grants and government subsidy, and to create extensive educational programs. Due to the complexity and interdependency of these diverse efforts it is impossible to discuss the various developments in strictly chronological order, and the three paths explored herein are necessarily interwoven.

Primary among the setbacks faced by the Phoenix in its first years was its dismal financial record. Hambleton and Houghton's plan to underwrite the cost of the seasons mounted at the Twelfth Street Theatre through transfers to Broadway proved a disappointing failure. Each of the first four seasons had resulted in losses, and it had become apparent that far from realizing meager profits, the plan was destined to create six-figure deficits.⁴ While Hambleton and Houghton had focused their attention on creating an alternative theatre, their consistent record of losses had begun to look suspiciously like a tax dodge

to the Internal Revenue Service, especially when it was a matter of public record that the Phoenix was only "ostensibly" a profit-seeking venture.⁵ The managers faced two alternatives: re-organize the plan so that it could turn a profit or become nonprofit.

Since monetary gain never had been a motive, the logical decision was to go nonprofit. Though logical, this solution was not easily accomplished because nonprofit charters for theatres were rare in 1957. Houghton, however, provided a possible answer to the dilemma: Theatre Incorporated, an inactive nonprofit corporation, had been established immediately after the war by Houghton, Beatrice Straight, and Robert Woods.⁶ By allowing itself to be absorbed by Theatre Incorporated, the Phoenix could solve part of its financial problem. With the help of the prominent theatre lawyer, John F. Wharton, Hambleton and Houghton arranged for Theatre Incorporated to take over the financial management of the Phoenix Theatre and persuaded most of the original Phoenix backers to become board members. As general managers of a nonprofit theatre, Hambleton and Houghton would function much as they had as general partners of a limited partnership. They would answer to the board of directors but they would retain artistic control of the Phoenix.⁷ Through this arrangement, Hambleton and Houghton could pursue financial backing through tax-exempt donations.

However, the public perception of nonprofit status for a theatre presented another obstacle. Some museums and symphonies had enjoyed nonprofit, tax-exempt status for decades, but in 1957 (even more than now) theatre was seen as "show business." From this perspective a producer who could not turn a profit was simply offering inferior wares that could not hold their own on the open market. Hambleton and Houghton now had to convert their backers (who could justify their support of the Phoenix as a risky venture that favored art over commerce) into patrons (who must openly acknowledge that they were donating money to a losing concern).⁸ Some of the backers, such as Richard Rodgers, accepted this conversion readily, but others, such as Jack Seidman, considered it an act of heresy. One substantial blow came when Howard and Marguerite Cullman, who had a history of shrewd investments as Broadway angels and were universally respected, backed out.⁹

On the surface, such reluctance seems absurd. After all, Hambleton and Houghton were now merely offering backers the chance to write off what were previously bad "investments" as tax-deductible donations, but the situation was not as simple as it may seem today. The wary response of the backers was based on an assumption that there was a taint about operating nonprofit. It was somehow "un-American" or "morally wrong" or a "violation of the Protestant work ethic."¹⁰ Hambleton and Houghton's

position was delicate: to continue operation, they must become nonprofit, but they also must avoid losing the financial resources they had tapped previously. The situation was reminiscent of an earlier dilemma that both Hambleton and Houghton would have preferred to forget. In 1955 the Phoenix had suffered a scrape with McCarthyism.

In his memoirs Houghton makes no direct connection between the shift to nonprofit status and earlier strained relations (and loss of backing) caused by political allegiances; however, he places his observations about the Red Scare and its effect on the Phoenix outside the chronological treatment that controls his narrative and just before his description of the decision to become nonprofit. He and Hambleton made that decision in the summer of 1957. Two years earlier the partners had faced condemnation in such watch-dog publications as Red Channels and Counterattack. The accusation? Worse than merely "associating" with people of suspicious political backgrounds, they had openly hired known communists!

As John Houseman points out in Front and Center, unlike Hollywood, New York had no no blacklist, but it did have a "graylist," inclusion on which virtually guaranteed an artist would not be hired by commercial managements. Houseman faced the wrath of studio executives after hiring Will Geer for the role of Sicinius in the 1954 production of Coriolanus which Houseman had directed at the

Phoenix.¹¹ Of course, Hambleton and Houghton's open association with Howard Da Silva did little to enhance the Phoenix' reputation among those who accepted the tactics of the House Committee on Un-American Activities (hereafter HUAC). Da Silva, who co-produced and directed Sandhog, the second offering of the 1954-55 season, was a prominent figure during the period primarily because he was the first hostile witness to appear before HUAC when its investigation continued in 1951 after the Hollywood Ten decision had made it through the courts. Other sources of suspicion were the authorship and content of Sandhog: both of the authors, Waldo Salt and Earl Robinson, were on Hollywood's blacklist, and the subject of the work was the dismal fate of laborers digging the first tunnel under the North River in New York City during the 1880s. In Entrances and Exits, Houghton paraphrases the thinking that permeated the period and shows how the political climate affected the finances of the Phoenix:

As for Robinson and Salt's Sandhog, that was a red stain from start to finish. So the word went out: Don't let those smooth Ivy League types fool you. Their whole enterprise smells of sedition. Nip this so-called Phoenix Theatre in the bud and prove your own true patriotism! We managing directors were troubled--of course we were troubled. . . .

Only a handful of our supporters withdrew their help. Among them, however, was Mrs. Vincent Astor, and that made a difference. The previous May she had cochaired with Richard Rodgers a benefit luncheon to launch our first subscription season. But when Red Channels upbraided her for her naïveté in supporting a write to her in care of Newsweek (which her husband

owned), Mrs. Astor backed away from us. I feared it might be our death blow and was profoundly upset at what seemed both an action totally alien to Brooke's character and a betrayal of a long friendship. I subsequently came to understand the difficulty of her position at the time--married recently to Astor, she was burdened with all the unaccustomed responsibilities that entailed and doubtless felt insecure in her new role. Nevertheless, her defection caused a breach that healed only after Vincent's death four years later.¹²

Furthermore, Houghton had been subpoenaed to appear before HUAC in February 1957, a mere six months prior to the decision to convert to nonprofit status.¹³ Despite this, neither Hambleton nor Houghton remembers any references to socialism or communism during the conversion to nonprofit status.¹⁴ This does not, however, refute the connection between nonprofit activity and socialist leanings which has been noted elsewhere. The nonprofit sector had had a rocky co-existence with its conservative detractors throughout the history of the United States, and the dispute had been publicly aired since World War II. Conservatives tended to oppose nonprofit enterprise and suspected private foundations of conspiring with socialists to undermine the capitalist system.¹⁵ Several critics and historians have referred to the leftist leanings of nonprofit theatres.¹⁶ Moreover, evidence suggests that in the 1950s nonprofit status was undesirable or unattainable because of the negative associations attached to it. In 1955, all the prominent off-Broadway theatres except for the Phoenix took care to proclaim their commer-

cial standing publicly. They did not want the public to see them as connected to educational programs or to any form of subsidy.¹⁷ This attitude reflects an assumption that had wide currency at the time: any theatre that was not operating for profit was amateur (as in "embarrassingly inept"). Further evidence of the lack of support for nonprofit standing is provided by Zelda Fichandler's experience. In 1950 she had meant to start Arena Stage as a nonprofit theatre but could not attain the necessary funds. Only after she offered stock to back the theatre as a profit-seeking venture did she get the money she was after.¹⁸

Hambleton and Houghton found that the American theatre's reluctance to slough off its entrepreneurial shell was deep-seated and was shared not only by producers but also by actors. Within the ranks of their casts they had seen ample evidence that actors considered their talent a commodity to be traded rather than a skill to be nurtured. Hambleton and Houghton had been encouraged to establish a permanent acting company by critics as well as by Tyrone Guthrie, who had directed several productions during the first years of the Phoenix. But bringing the plan to fruition took more than a firm resolve; countless obstacles hampered such a project, the primary one being the reservations exhibited by actors who did not wish to commit themselves to a full season. Hambleton and

Houghton were interested in hiring English actors for such a company but were barred from doing so by Equity.¹⁹

However, it was not just Equity that they were working against. They were waging a battle against the American way of thought, and they knew it. In 1962 Houghton wrote:

. . . nothing in the American theatre is more difficult--financially and psychologically--than to establish a 'repertory company.' We hear enthusiastic lip service widely paid to the concept. But the actor in New York shrewdly counters, when faced with a firm offer to join a permanent company, "What's in it for me? What parts shall I play? If I get a better offer, can I withdraw?"

I sympathize with this caution. I understand it. But I know that no Russian actor asks these questions. For this inviolability of the individual, to give it a grand name, is a Western concept. It underlies our entire way of life. Indeed, it is what we have fought in time past to defend, and would fight again to preserve.²⁰

By trying to convince actors to sign seasonal contracts, Hambleton and Houghton were clearing the way to uncharted territory that would still appear rugged and unmanageable more than a decade later.

During the 1973-4 season Robert Brustein was frustrated by the same situation. He, too, found that English actors were eager to join his effort but that he was barred from hiring them by Equity. Like Houghton before him, he came to understand that the actor was not really to blame. Reflecting on the subject in 1981, he realized that the actor was only a part of the machinery of the theatre industry. Agents, for example, were not

interested in taking their commodities off the market for extended periods of time. He concluded his thoughts on the subject by observing, "fundamentally, the difficulty lay in the values of American society, as determined by our economic system."²¹ The trouble he encountered with casting a season of repertory bothered Brustein, but he was further concerned about the effect the system was having on the students who graduated from Yale University and who went on to become movie and television stars instead of dedicating themselves to repertory work.

Considering Brustein's observations of 1981, it is understandable that in 1957 Hambleton and Houghton were reluctant to create a public clamor when they embraced nonprofit status and launched their quiet attack on the system. Aside from a brief announcement in Lewis Funke's column for the New York Times on 17 March 1957, the only public account of their action appeared nearly a year later in a short statement in Variety.²²

Beginning with the October 1957 production of Mary Stuart the Phoenix became the seventh nonprofit professional theatre in the nation, the others being ANTA, City Center, the American Shakespeare Festival, the Alley Theatre, the Cleveland Playhouse, and Margo Jones' theatre in Dallas. It is important, however, to note the ways in which the Phoenix differed from these theatres. Unlike the Phoenix, ANTA, City Center and the Shakespeare

Festival did not offer an extended calendar of performances. The Shakespeare Festival operated only in the summer; ANTA produced only occasionally; and City Center's program in drama was ancillary to opera, dance and music.²³ Also, each of the three enjoyed special government support. ANTA had been formed by Congress in 1935 but only became active after World War II. The American Shakespeare Festival was granted nonprofit tax exempt status by the state of Connecticut in 1954 and was considered a state asset. City Center was formed by powerful political forces in New York City under circumstances very similar to the Lincoln Center project that followed in the sixties.²⁴ Unlike these ventures, the Phoenix enjoyed no special federal, state, or city support.²⁵

The Phoenix also contrasted with the nonprofit theatres outside the New York City area. The Cleveland Playhouse had been nonprofit since its inception in 1915 during the Little Theatre movement. From New York's perspective the Cleveland Playhouse was professional only in the sense that its administrators and casts were paid. Aside from this it operated as a community theatre. It developed its own actors and directors and had no interaction with the New York theatre. Also nonprofit since its founding in 1947, the Alley Theatre operated in much the same way, although it had become fully professional with Equity casts in 1954.

Unlike the managers of these two theatres, Margo Jones had had experience with the commercial theatre. Certainly her work had sown the seeds of the regional theatre movement of the 1960s, and of the theatres mentioned here hers was the closest in structure to the Phoenix. She had offered full seasons of plays and had worked with actors who had appreciable Broadway and film experience. However, like the Alley Theatre and the Cleveland Playhouse, the Margo Jones Theatre was located far enough away from New York to avoid arousing much concern. More important, when producing in New York, Jones had left her nonprofit status in Texas and offered her shows under the traditional limited partnership contract. Although her plan, like that of the Phoenix, offered a new means of operating a theatre, it did not threaten Broadway's traditions.

In Regional Theatre: the Revolutionary Stage, Joseph Zeigler stresses how different Margo Jones was from the other nonprofit managers of the period. He writes:

Unlike Margo before them, they were people whom Broadway had not chosen anyway. There was no one saying 'no' to Broadway who had had significant experience with it--and therefore there was no one leaving the central situation disgusted with it and revolted by it. This lack of taste of what they were rejecting would come to haunt the earliest leaders, but that is a later story.²⁶

In contrast, Hambleton and Houghton had more experience with Broadway than Jones had, and they intended to operate

an ongoing nonprofit operation in Broadway's back yard. The structure of the Phoenix program represented a challenge to the entrepreneurial image that Broadway enjoyed. More than any other enterprise, the hit Broadway show functioned as a splashy, shining example of the rags-to-riches American dream come true.²⁷ Although rising production costs had dampened the enthusiasm of novice producers, those costs had also served to make the risk of producing that much more dramatic. What Hambleton and Houghton were proposing may not have been intended as a frontal attack on this tradition, but it was a denial of an honored system. ANTA's Experimental Theatre and the City Center might have been nonprofit, but they had merely offered a few weeks of work to actors who otherwise would not have been employed. The Stratford Festival was devoted to Shakespeare, and nonprofit production of the Bard was acceptable since it was impossible to make a profit with his plays anyway. But the Phoenix was a year-round operation. In four years it had managed to offer some arresting productions, but it had failed to create a legitimate hit and had lost money every season. Why not do the honorable thing and fold? Had not Le Gallienne done so twice? Why did Hambleton and Houghton refuse to accept failure? New York simply did not buy their plan. Why should they start asking for handouts?

Given such a climate, it is understandable that Hambleton and Houghton moved forward quietly. Previously the Phoenix had set itself apart from the commercial theatre by producing off-Broadway and offering seasons of plays, and now it set out to discover if it was possible for a professional theatre to function as a nonprofit corporation in New York. Of course, the large number of nonprofit theatres that emerged throughout the country in the 1960s might have done so without the lead of the Phoenix, but most of them developed in the wake of the Ford Foundation's decision to fund resident theatres. Nonprofit activity in New York, the heart of commercial production, was slower in developing. Aside from the Living Theatre, which turned nonprofit in 1960, the Phoenix continued as the sole nonprofit theatre in New York City until Lincoln Center opened at the ANTA Washington Square Theatre in 1963.²⁸ The new institutional theatres that followed Lincoln Center, such as the American Place (1964) and the Negro Ensemble Company (1967), were founded as nonprofit, but the older theatres of the city were reluctant to make the move and took years to do so: Richard Barr, Clinton Wilder, and Edward Albee's offerings of new plays began in 1961 but did not become nonprofit until 1965; Circle in the Square waited until 1966. Again, though, these efforts came after the avalanche of foundation money that made nonprofit status attractive.

Although the Phoenix venture into the nonprofit market was quiet, the same can not be said for its first effort at establishing a resident theatre in New York. Later Hambleton would continue this effort alone, but in his original attempt he still enjoyed Houghton's support as co-manager. They began working toward the goal in 1956, and it took them three years to bring the effort to a semblance of fruition. Hambleton and Houghton had been accused of lacking a point of view, and their eclectic approach to play selection had led to charges that theirs was a "grab-bag" theatre.²⁹ Sensitive to such claims and seeing validity in them, in 1958 Hambleton and Houghton set out to answer their accusers by hiring Stuart Vaughan, one of off-Broadway's brightest lights, as their artistic director. Vaughan had studied repertory theatres in Europe under a Fulbright scholarship and had won accolades from the critics for his direction of Shakespeare for Joseph Papp's Shakespeare Festival in Central Park. John Keating felt that Vaughan was the earliest example of a new type of director and commented that his vita included as many references to universities as to theatres.

Vaughan's reaction to the Hambleton and Houghton's offer indicates the unique nature of the Phoenix' position at the time. Vaughan said, "When Norris Houghton and T. Edward Hambleton offered me the Phoenix job . . . I was flattered, honored and kind of staggered. It was a chance

to do what I had always dreamed of doing, to have a year-round creative life in the theatre and a living wage with it."³⁰ Although Vaughan had been directing for Joseph Papp for several seasons and had received a good deal of attention from critics, he had not been able to earn his living as a director. Doing so was a novelty to him because his experience had been limited to other off-Broadway managements that did not see their efforts as a mainstream alternative to Broadway. Hambleton and Houghton's conviction that artists should be paid a living wage came from their commercial background, and if such ventures as theirs were to win the acceptance of the public and the theatrical community, they needed to function within established norms and traditions of the profession. Unlike the off-Broadway theatres managed by the younger generation, the Phoenix did not assume that the artists working for it should do so at their own sacrifice. True, the Phoenix was not offering a living wage to its actors in the strictest sense. As Vaughan notes, working for the Phoenix never was lucrative,³¹ and actors under contract to the Phoenix could have earned more in commercial theatre or films. But even the lowest paid actors at the Phoenix in the mid-1950s earned roughly one hundred dollars a week. This was more than twice what other off-Broadway managements were offering and equal to the Broadway minimum for the time.³²

When they started in 1953, Hambleton and Houghton had limited runs to six weeks so that actors could work at the Phoenix and in the commercial theatre in the same season, but starting in 1956 they attempted to persuade actors to sign full-season contracts.³³ The effort to attract actors received a marked boost in 1959 when the Ford Foundation included the Phoenix in a program that challenged actors to accept the full-season contracts that Hambleton and Houghton had been offering for three years.³⁴ The program offered to underwrite resident companies for four theatres: Arena Stage, the Alley Theatre, the Actors Workshop of San Francisco, and the Phoenix. The Ford Foundation had decided to see if actors who claimed they would prefer seasonal work were serious. The foundation made its position clear:

In an attempt to determine whether audiences and actors will support repertory theater, the Foundation approved grants totalling \$559,000 for four nationally recognized theaters. . . . The grants, which require that [each] theater match them on a one-to-one basis, will enable each theatre to retain ten first-rank professional actors on full-season contracts at \$200 a week, thus achieving the residential companies necessary to the maintenance of high repertory standards. The test of the actors' commitment--particularly of those thirty [sic] who decide to leave New York, the theater capital of the country--is crucial to the experiments.³⁵

Lowry assumed the grant would help the regional theatres attract casts, but Hambleton found that the Ford plan limited his casting. Two hundred dollars a week for forty weeks was a much more attractive lure in the other

cities than it was in New York. For example, the grant altered the finances of the Actors Workshop considerably. Previously its actors, like those of the off-Broadway houses in New York, were earning their living outside the theatre. Robert Symonds had exhausted himself in meeting his obligations to the theatre and to his family. According to Jules Irving, when he informed Symonds of the grant, "tears welled up in Bob's eyes, and he said, 'Thank God, 'cause I couldn't have lasted one more month.'"³⁶

By contrast, the stipulations of the Ford grant hindered casting policies that the Phoenix had used for years. Although most of the cast had been working for \$100 per week, featured players had been offered substantially more. Fritz Weaver, for example, had earned \$300 per week during the previous season. Such flexibility was not allowed by the Ford grant, which mandated that \$200 be the top salary paid by the theatre. Hambleton found this troublesome since it cost him the services of his most able players. Stuart Little would later write: "Hambleton questioned whether this form of subsidy was good for the Phoenix. 'What we really needed,' he said, 'was money to adequately publicize and attract an audience.'"³⁷

Stewart Vaughan disagrees with Hambleton's position on this matter and feels that the \$200 restriction was not a problem.³⁸ Vaughan's perceptions of the Phoenix in the late 1950s are of particular consequence because the only

published commentary on his employment by Hambleton is offered in Vaughan's book, A Possible Theatre. The overall view that he presents of Hambleton and Houghton's management of the Phoenix during his three-year tenure as artistic director (1958-61) is far from flattering. They are portrayed as short-sighted impresarios with a "dilet-tante attitude" who "were unable to make a firm choice between the search for 'a success' and the search for a theatre."³⁹ This claim appears highly suspect when balanced against Hambleton and Houghton's past. Neither of them, even during their earlier commercial careers, had sought "success" in the sense that Vaughan implies.⁴⁰

On the contrary, they had both been fighting the limitations dictated by "searching for a success," and when they hired Vaughan as their first artistic director, the managers provided evidence of their commitment to a resident company and to announced seasons. Vaughan was dedicated to repertory work, and he felt strongly that the Phoenix should announce each season well in advance.⁴¹ Previously the Phoenix had announced seasons that named specific titles but also included a good deal of flexibility. Invariably the subscription brochures had indicated that the season of five plays would include two or more plays "to be announced" which would be drawn from a list of several choices. At times, due to casting problems or difficulty obtaining rights, none of the

listed optional choices were produced. Without a permanent company of actors, casting had remained a problem, and gaining rights to plays had been a continuous battle.

The complexity of negotiations for production rights is reflected in the patience needed to bring a production of Shaw's Saint Joan to the Phoenix. Hambleton and Houghton originally pursued the issue in 1954 but could not gain rights for a New York production. Early in 1956 Hambleton learned that Roger Stevens had applied for rights for the play in the United States.⁴² Negotiations with Stevens would be relatively easy since he was a personal friend and was an active supporter of the Phoenix, but the Theatre Guild had prior exclusive rights for any American production of a Shaw play.⁴³ After further negotiations and lobbying, the Phoenix still could not make arrangements for its own production, but in October 1956 it managed to present the Cambridge Drama Festival production starring Siobhan McKenna with the stipulation that Stevens would produce any subsequent Broadway production.⁴⁴ McKenna had created a stir in her Broadway debut as Madrigal in Enid Bagnold's A Chalk Garden the previous fall, and procuring a star of her calibre enhanced Hambleton's position in negotiations. In selling the idea of a production at the Phoenix, Hambleton stressed the possibility of a transfer to Broadway and a television

production in letters to McKenna, the Cambridge Drama Festival, the Theatre Guild, and the Shaw estate.⁴⁵

Of course, Hambleton and Houghton were not the only managers to face such difficulties, and protracted negotiations over rights did not magically evaporate during the 1960s when regional theatres began to face these issues; however, Hambleton and Houghton bore the burden of working within the New York market.

Although it might seem that such a position would be advantageous--after all, a Phoenix production could win a good deal of attention and enhance the potential for commercial success--there was also an advantage in not being part of the New York market. A production of Saint Joan in San Francisco or Washington could not possibly harm the potential box office receipts of a Broadway production, the result being that rights could be much less a problem for other resident theatres than for the Phoenix. Furthermore, in comparison to the Phoenix the resident theatres outside New York had the advantage of playing to a captive audience. The Phoenix might emphasize its uniqueness in being the only theatre in New York offering a season of plays, but unlike the resident theatres in other cities it had no monopoly on its potential audience.

Its location in New York was, then, a mixed blessing. It enjoyed a larger pool of actors from which to cast a season than did the regional theatres, but it faced a far

more competitive market for the services of those actors. Its role as a highly visible major producer in New York could enhance its chance to gain the rights to a play; yet, as witnessed in Hambleton's tactics to entice Siobhan McKenna to the Phoenix, the managers had to balance their interest in nonprofit production with the entrepreneurial skills that all players expected of a New York producer. Balancing these two opposites was a daunting task, and the challenge was particularly torturous during the pivotal 1958-59 season in which the Phoenix was closest to establishing a clear identity as New York's resident theatre.

The managers had announced a season of plays selected from Nobel Prize winners: Eliot's The Family Reunion, Shaw's Arm's and the Man, Pirandello's As You Desire Me, Camus's Les Justes, and a fifth play by Hauptmann, Yeats, or Maeterlinck. When they opened the season with The Family Reunion, a play widely seen as esoteric and wordy, Hambleton and Houghton served notice that they were willing to accept risk. Critical response was tepid, as most critics questioned the choice of such a difficult play then went on to praise the acting and the production.⁴⁶ Walter Kerr's review was reminiscent of his response to Billy Budd a decade earlier. He wrote, "the Phoenix has performed a considerable public service in arranging an earnest, beautifully spoken, genuinely distinguished

production of an extraordinarily difficult piece of work."⁴⁷

The reviews did little to enhance attendance, and the weak houses exacerbated the theatre's financial woes. Aggressive fund raising tactics during the spring and summer had yielded meager results. Amidst the optimism about Vaughan's hiring and the newly established sense of direction, the managers and the board of Theatre Incorporated had planned presentations to fifteen foundations and had tried to land a corporate donor for each of the five productions.⁴⁸ Response from foundations and corporations was cool, and when the season opened the Phoenix was operating on a show-to show-basis, a situation that left the theatre particularly vulnerable to the box office. The low grosses from The Family Reunion put the season in jeopardy and prompted the the managers to abandon their Nobel Prize plan. Roger Stevens, a member of the board, volunteered to provide The Power and the Glory, an adaptation by Denis Cannan and Pierre Bost of the Graham Greene novel, for production at the Phoenix until finances could be sorted out.⁴⁹ This production ran for seventy-one performances and was followed by The Beaux' Strategem, which lasted only sixteen performances because of weak audiences despite general critical acclaim.⁵⁰ Although Hambleton and Houghton had hired Vaughan at the beginning of the 1958-59 season to solidify

their effort to establish a permanent company, after three productions under his direction the Phoenix was facing a deficit of \$148,165. They were forced to halt operations and offer their subscribers refunds.⁵¹

The alternatives now open to the managers were few: they could cease operations or stall while they continued to look for ways of raising money. Not surprisingly means of rescue came to them a from past contact in the commercial theatre. William and Jean Eckart had taken an option on Once Upon a Mattress, a musical by Richard Roger's daughter Mary, and they asked Hambleton and Houghton to co-produce.

Mattress was a commercial vehicle, and in mounting it the managers took a step away from their goal of a resident company. Stewart Vaughan was opposed to the production,⁵² but there was not much choice. No prospects for grants were imminent, and with no income the Phoenix would lose its lease on the Twelfth Street Theatre. Hambleton and Houghton reverted to commercial status, hired George Abbott to direct the project, and mounted the musical in co-production with the Eckarts. Undoubtedly Hambleton and Houghton mounted Mattress in the hope of establishing a hit,⁵³ and Vaughan felt the decision was a reflection of Hambleton and Houghton's lack of resolve. It was, however, more like an eleventh-hour attempt to keep the theatre afloat.

Stuart Little goes so far as to say that Mattress saved the Phoenix from extinction.⁵⁴ An examination of Hambleton's activities during the run of Mattress shows that Little's assertion has some credence. Although the musical did not earn vast sums of money, it kept the Twelfth Street Theatre in operation and in the Phoenix' control.⁵⁵ More important, it did not lose money. Since it was running indefinitely, the managers had time to consider the options that were available to them. The Phoenix had reached a turning point. If it were to continue, either it would have to abandon the resident company and accept the show-to-show mentality favored by the the rest of New York or it would have to raise much more money.

Hambleton and Houghton's commitment to an announced season with a resident company was a clear departure from the entrepreneurial mindset that dominated the New York City theatre in the late 1950s, and the contrast between these two approaches to production came into sharp focus at a 3 March 1959 board meeting for Theatre Incorporated.⁵⁶ At this meeting, Hambleton proposed a subscription campaign designed to raise subscriptions from 5,000 to 12,500, and was challenged by Alfred R. Stern, one of the original backers of the Phoenix who had been an active board member since the theatre had turned non-profit.⁵⁷ Stern could not understand how Hambleton

intended to more than double subscriptions without hiring stars and aiming for hits, his argument being that "subscriptions must be sold, and the basis of the sale must be the excitement surrounding something that lots of people would want to go and see." Hambleton responded with details of his plan and insisted that if the board could not provide the \$20,000 needed to mount his subscription campaign, the Phoenix should cease operations.⁵⁸ Hambleton felt that such a visible campaign would attract foundation support, but Stern remained unconvinced, noting that foundations had never supported the Phoenix in the past.

Hambleton persisted and won the support needed to launch his plan. His efforts the previous spring had garnered no support from foundations, but his renewed emphasis on subscriptions yielded more positive results. In May 1959, the Old Dominion and Avalon Foundations each pledged \$75,000 to the Phoenix if it could attain 9,000 subscriptions.⁵⁹ By October the Phoenix had secured 11,588 subscribers, nearly achieving Hambleton's goal of 12,500.⁶⁰

Simultaneous with these developments Hambleton was dealt a significant setback: the resignation of Norris Houghton. In assessing his own situation, Houghton had decided that he must resign as co-manager, and, despite Hambleton's efforts to dissuade him, he left to pursue a

teaching career.⁶¹ Houghton's departure in June 1959 came in the midst of Hambleton's subscription campaign, and Hambleton was obliged to continue the development of the resident company without Houghton's aid.

With Vaughan as artistic director and Hambleton as sole managing director, the Phoenix offered a 1959-60 season with a resident cast of nearly twenty and productions of The Great God Brown, Lysistrata, an adaptation of O'Casey's Pictures in the Hallway, Peer Gynt, and Henry IV, Parts 1 and 2.⁶² With the backing of the Old Dominion and Avalon Foundations and income from subscriptions, the Phoenix enjoyed a more stable financial base than it had since its inception.⁶³ In late November the Ford Foundation announced its grant to underwrite salaries for the resident company.⁶⁴ The opening production of The Great God Brown received warm praise from critics, but Lysistrata, directed by Jean Gascon, was universally proclaimed obscene and panned.⁶⁵

The decision to mount this production underscored differences between Hambleton and Vaughan that would eventually contribute to Vaughan's departure two years later. Vaughan tended to be very possessive of the company, and wanted to maintain strict artistic control.⁶⁶ Hambleton, in keeping with his previous policy at the Phoenix, wanted to have an open association with artists outside the company, especially directors.⁶⁷ During

rehearsals for Lysistrata both Hambleton and Vaughan were aware that Gascon was approaching the play unconventionally and graphically and both had reservations about allowing the production to go forward, but Hambleton held sway with his "hands off" policy, and the Phoenix bore the brunt of the critics' wrath. The incident further entrenched Vaughan's attitude about control, and he insisted upon directing every production thereafter.⁶⁸ By the end of the season the Phoenix had recovered from the controversy over Lysistrata and was running the two parts of Henry IV in repertory to applause from audiences and critics alike.

The following season was arguably the most successful in the Phoenix' history. Most of the resident company returned, and the season included The Plough and the Stars, She Stoops to Conquer, The Octoroon, and Hamlet. The season opened with a presentation of the Stratford Ontario Festival's production of H.M.S. Pinafore, directed by Tyrone Guthrie. This production was well received by critics and the public and seemed to set an upbeat tone for the season. Of the plays in the resident season, only The Plough and the Stars met a with cool reception. All the others enjoyed critical acclaim, and the final production of Hamlet had strong public appeal. It ran for twelve and one-half weeks at the Phoenix and continued with a state-wide tour.

Despite such apparent success, the Phoenix had to abandon its resident company plan the following season. The announcement of a repertory theatre as a part of the Lincoln Center project had attracted a good deal of attention, and Hambleton was finding fund raising increasingly difficult.⁶⁹ Continued deficits despite subscriptions and foundation grants hampered Hambleton and Vaughan's ability to plan the 1961-62 season adequately in advance.⁷⁰ Vaughan gave up in frustration, leaving Hambleton to decide whether to close the Phoenix or to continue while seeking new means of cutting losses. The size of the Twelfth Street Theatre had become an ever-increasing burden,⁷¹ and Hambleton chose to move the Phoenix to a smaller house, the 74th Street Theatre on the Upper East Side of Manhattan. Once established at this new location, he combined a new effort to create a resident company with the Anderson Theatre Project, an education program of staggering proportions.

The Anderson Theatre Project was one of several the education programs that the Phoenix pursued in its first decade. Hambleton's efforts to interest student audiences is difficult to put into a meaningful context because scholars have shown very little interest in the attempts of professional theatres to involve students as audience or as active participants.⁷² An additional obstacle to evaluating the educational programs of the Phoenix is the

unique way in which they were instituted. As with all theatres, the methods of production and the products of those methods reflect the operational style of its leadership. The most accurate way to describe Hambleton's style as a producer/manager is to say that he functioned as an enabler. In discussing Hambleton's approach to producing, Richard Kirschner, who helped Hambleton in his efforts to attract student audiences, commented:

T. Hambleton's style of producing, and I find it an admirable style--but again, when people want things to be orderly and logical and linear, they are disturbed by this--anyway, his style as a producer was to step back and provide a canvas on which the artist would work. He did not intrude or interfere or (some would say) participate. Now he did participate in the artistic process on occasion, but rarely. If there was a dispute with the director, T. would defer to the director.⁷³

This method of operation permeated all that the Phoenix did during its twenty-nine-year history. Instead of forcing a grand scheme upon a given production or season, Hambleton merely provided a means for the artists involved to explore the potential of the project chosen.

This concept was precisely the reason that the Phoenix had come into being in 1953: both Houghton and Hambleton wanted to create an atmosphere free of the stresses so prevalent in commercial production. Beyond this they practiced a "conscious eclecticism" that prompted myriad claims that they lacked any appreciable point of view.⁷⁴ This willingness to explore a variety of projects is

apparent in the Phoenix' education programs. Therefore, although the Phoenix was among the first theatres in the nation to offer such projects for public schools, it cannot be credited with a carefully planned and executed outreach program because its efforts to reach the students of the New York City area were sporadic. This does not mean, however, that these programs were merely an afterthought. Efforts were too numerous and too strongly backed for such a deduction to be valid. The pattern was not one of clearly defined, linear development. Instead the Phoenix' involvement with student audiences moved in fits and starts, some aspects being cautious, others bold.

Regardless of the scarcity of source material and the irregularity of its education programs, the Phoenix was one of the first post-war theatres to concern itself with attracting student audiences to its productions. Its first overture to New York's student population came during its first season: an offer of discounted tickets for students to its production of Coriolanus in the fall of 1953. The following season, Hambleton and Houghton invited editors of school newspapers to a mass interview prior to each Saturday matinee of Shaw's The Doctor's Dilemma, their third production. After the interview the editors were invited to stay for the performance. This program was offered in connection with the discounted student tickets, and response was strong.⁷⁵ Although pleased

with the results, the managers did not tabulate response to the student program.⁷⁶ It was not until a later identical effort in 1960 and 1961 that Hambleton kept track of such figures, and these in-house figures suggest that the Phoenix student ticket program was very successful.⁷⁷ Pleased by the strong response, Hambleton created an "in-service" program for public school teachers, but the response to this effort was less encouraging.⁷⁸

The first program to move out to the schools instead of having the students come to the Phoenix was Theatre-at-the-Schools, later called the Portable Phoenix.⁷⁹ This project evolved from the formation of the permanent acting company when Hambleton and Houghton offered Stuart Vaughan the post of artistic director in 1958. Although it was created partially as a "make-work" system for the younger actors who were under contract for the season, it was part of a plan that had been written in 1957.⁸⁰ This program consisted of a touring production that played to New York City high schools at a price of ten dollars per school.⁸¹ The Phoenix had this program in place before federal, state, or foundation funds were offered for such projects and it financed the project for three years with no governmental subsidy.⁸²

Not until five years later, in 1965, did Congress pass the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, which provided funds for schools to develop projects that involved

artists. Joseph Zeigler points out that this "Great Society" bill was an important source of funds for institutional theatres around the country:

For the regional theatre, the new legislation was manna from heaven. The variety of educational service programs soon became so great that some theatres added special staffing to handle them. Scores of proposals arrived at the United States Office of Education in Washington for grants to schools to purchase theatre services--nearly all of them engineered, I daresay, by the theatres, to keep the dependable revenue coming in.⁸³

In contrast, only two of the education programs offered by the Phoenix were a part of this avalanche of efforts--the second Portable Phoenix under the APA-Phoenix in the late 1960s and a 1971 program that placed six young directors in New York City schools. The rest of the Phoenix education programs predate the major sources of funding.⁸⁴

Joseph Papp's well-publicized tours of city schools and parks in the 1960s were funded by the New York City Board of Education, but the Theatre-at-the-Schools program of the Phoenix enjoyed no such largess. Although the Phoenix project was coordinated through the Board of Education, it received no funds from the city.⁸⁵ Hambleton fought to implement the Phoenix program prior to such funding.

Again, this is consistent with Hambleton's style of management. The idea came first, and the means of funding the idea followed--just as the idea for the formation of the Phoenix came five years before Hambleton and Houghton realized that it had to be funded as a nonprofit enter-

prise. Joseph Papp's first foray into school touring came the year after the Phoenix had started the Theatre-at-the-Schools program. With \$50,000 from the Board of Education, Papp offered a touring program that was identical in scope and structure to the Theatre-at-the-Schools program.⁸⁶

The next educational program launched by the Phoenix, the Anderson Theatre Project, is arguably the boldest education program ever undertaken by a professional theatre in the nation. Hambleton had moved the Phoenix uptown to 74th Street in 1961, and in the winter of 1962 he leased the Anderson Theatre, located at Second Avenue and Fourth Street in order to mount productions for high school audiences. Although the 74th Street Theatre had only 299 seats (a considerable reduction from the nearly 1200 of the Twelfth Street Theatre) the Anderson had 1700. Clearly, Hambleton was planning to bring in droves of students, and the results of the first production suggested that he just might pull it off.⁸⁷

An examination of the project reveals several bold ideas. First, the sheer size of the project is impressive. There were to be four plays: Robert Sherwood's Abe Lincoln in Illinois, The Taming of the Shrew, and Shaw's The Devil's Disciple, and an untitled new play by Irwin Shaw.⁸⁸ Each was to run five and one-half weeks, and, to accommodate school bookings, Hambleton instituted

a highly unorthodox performance schedule. Previews lasted two weeks and followed the standard off-Broadway schedule: 8:30 curtains Tuesday through Sunday with weekend matinees. But as of the 28 January opening the only performances open to the public were Saturday and Sunday evenings and Sunday matinees. The remaining performances were all matinees--4:00 Tuesday-Friday and 2:30 Saturday--and were restricted to high school audiences.⁸⁹ Ticket prices were low, even by off-Broadway's standards, and the weekend public performances were offered at the same scale as the previews: orchestra seats ranged from \$2.50 to \$3.50, balcony seats from \$1.50 to \$2.50. All student tickets sold for \$1.50, a price that helped the student ticket program to begin auspiciously with an advance sale of 50,000 tickets.⁹⁰

The plan for the Anderson Theatre Project was devised by Richard Kirschner, who had cut his teeth at the American Shakespeare Festival in Stratford, Connecticut, under the guidance of John Houseman. Kirschner had been at Stratford since its first season, working in a variety of departments.⁹¹ In the summer of 1958 Houseman mandated that the festival would have a preview season for student audiences and that Kirschner would create the program. Kirschner took a short leave of absence to study programs for young audiences in England, Denmark, and the Netherlands. The following spring he created a three-week stu-

dent season prior to the festival's public performance schedule. The project was a remarkable success, selling all the available 30,000 seats within three weeks of its announcement.⁹² In subsequent seasons the student audience program expanded until it was longer than the public season, and in 1967 a fall program was added.

In 1963, the Anderson Theatre Project duplicated much of what had been done at Stratford. Tickets were sold through schools, and the schedule favored matinees. Kirschner essentially worked to install the Stratford system at the Phoenix. In speaking of the project twenty-eight years later, he remembered that "it was promoted in the school system with brochures that were sent to the schools in a direct copy of the system that we used at Stratford. The brochures were designed by the same designer . . . and the text was largely lifted from the text that I had written for Stratford. So it was a direct steal--that is the approach to the promotion."⁹³

Kirschner readily offered this last parenthetical qualification to his remarks while being interviewed because he recognized that, despite the similarities between the two programs, there were also striking differences. The Stratford program was much more cautious. The first season of student performances last three weeks, not a full season; moreover, though it is true that the student schedule of performances eventually dwarfed that of the

public schedule, originally the students saw only one of the productions to be offered during the year.⁹⁴

Furthermore, at Stratford, Houseman intended to use the students at spring matinees as preview audiences. In describing the purpose of the Stratford program, he wrote:

Though it gave us a lot of additional work, it was worth it. Aside from the publicity and goodwill it brought us, it offered one serious artistic benefit. Most festival performances are exposed to the public (and to the critics) long before they are ready to be shown. The school season allowed us to shake down our productions before a most difficult audience and to restore our reassembled company to some sort of cohesive ensemble before the opening of the public season.⁹⁵

The students at Stratford served as the preview audience for later public performances, but Hambleton's plan for the Anderson Theatre Project turned this conventional reasoning on its head. The general public served as the preview audience in preparation for the student performances. Despite such apparently topsy-turvy planning, the program seemed viable. Unfortunately, adequate financing had not been secured to weather the combination of events that brought the project to a halt. Although Abe Lincoln closed with a net profit,⁹⁶ a "serious" production of Taming of the Shrew failed to attract audiences.⁹⁷ A city-wide newspaper strike that coincided with the run of these two plays made effective advertisement impossible, further weakening box office receipts.⁹⁸ Hambleton had intended to maintain operation of both the

74th Street Theatre and the Anderson Theatre by having the Phoenix subscription audience attend the Anderson season while Arthur Kopit's Oh, Dad. Poor Dad, Mama's Hung You in the Closet and I'm Feeling So Sad continued an indefinite run uptown.⁹⁹ Income from the Oh, Dad run was a welcome relief, but it was not adequate to offset the losses from the Anderson.¹⁰⁰

A few subsequent efforts by other theatres to attract student audiences have mirrored the organization of the Stratford/Anderson program. The most prominent is that of the Canadian Shakespeare Festival. Although the Canadian Festival's first attempt to attract student audiences predated Kirschner's efforts at Stratford, Connecticut, by a few months, it amounted only to six matinees of Henry IV, Part One tacked on to the schedule of the 1958 summer season.¹⁰¹ The Canadian Festival's student program later took on the same publicity and scheduling format that had worked so well for Stratford. The Canadian Shakespeare student program has grown cautiously since its inception and has become a dependable resource for both the festival and the schools that attend it. It offers proof that the tactics used by Hambleton at the Anderson can result in a stable and extensive student audience program.¹⁰²

In 1967 the National Endowment for the Arts and the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare funded student audience programs at three theatres: Inner City

Repertory (San Francisco), Repertory Theatre (New Orleans), and Trinity Square Repertory (Providence) All three projects copied the Stratford/Anderson program. Intended to attract a broad student audience, they offered five matinees per week and were marketed through the local public school systems. Like Hambleton's Anderson Theatre Project they all started big: they presented full seasons in the first year, and they were intended to be seen by all the secondary students of their respective areas.¹⁰³ Stuart Vaughan, who had moved on to New Orleans in 1966, invited editors of student newspapers to the Repertory Theatre for a interviews, an echo of a Phoenix tactic that was at this time thirteen years old.

Of these theatres only the Trinity Square is still operating in 1993, and its student audience program, Project Discovery, is still active.¹⁰⁴ Despite their close resemblance to the Stratford/Anderson program, none of the three projects acknowledged precursors. In fact, Trinity Square later promoted its program as the "grand-father for integration of the performing arts into the public school system."¹⁰⁵ These three ventures were made by regional theatres, and Joseph Papp's 1986 Belasco Project is the only comparable program to have been undertaken in New York City.¹⁰⁶ Aside from these attempts, no programs have developed that emulate the Anderson Theatre Project for several reasons: (1) as

designed the program must be large and must win the support of surrounding schools districts; (2) the plan is unlikely to be successful for a theatre that has not established a presence within its area; (3) it requires professional management and artistic staff that are willing to work for a high school audience; (4) federal funds have decreased for such programs, and other sources of income have become increasingly difficult to obtain.

Most of the other educational programs undertaken by the Phoenix during its history were more conventional. The largest was probably the second Portable Phoenix, which toured city parks and schools during the late 1960s. Aside from repertoire, this project was no different from the touring done by Joseph Papp's Mobile Unit, which was active at the same time.¹⁰⁷ However, the "New Phoenix Theatre Program for Schools," was more noteworthy: it placed six young directors in six different schools for the duration of the 1970-71 academic year.¹⁰⁸ The program was intended to provide students with ongoing contact with a practicing artist rather than limiting such exposure to a single visit. Each director was required to create at least one performance, but aside from this the directors were free to work with whomever they wanted and in whatever manner they wanted. The program soon ran afoul of political tensions within the schools and was not successful.¹⁰⁹ It ended after one year, but the apparent

lack of structure is yet another example of Hambleton's hands-off style of management. The individual artist was given absolute autonomy. A further reflection of the Hambleton style emerges in its scope. Like the Anderson Theatre Project, it did not start small. It did not settle for a pilot program, placing a single artist in a school for a semester to test the waters. It failed, but failed after having been given a full effort.

This same expansive approach to projects is apparent in the New York State tours of Hamlet and Androcles and the Lion in 1961 and The Matchmaker in 1962. Unlike the Anderson Theatre Project this Phoenix outreach program has spawned many followers. Though today many regional theatres accept touring in surrounding areas as part of their mandate, in the early 1960s nothing of this sort was being attempted. The only precursor to this effort was Margaret Webster's Marweb Shakespeare Company that toured the nation's colleges between 1948 and 1951.¹¹⁰ These Phoenix tours, however, served as a pilot program for later tours funded by the New York State Council on the Arts. In 1961 the New York State Council on the Arts (hereafter NYSCA) decided to fund state tours for the performing arts. Grants were given to three orchestras (New York Philharmonic, Buffalo Philharmonic, and Rochester Philharmonic), City Center for Drama and Music, and the Phoenix. City Center toured opera and ballet at the time;

therefore, the Phoenix was the only theatre to receive a grant. It can be argued that the Phoenix won this grant by default since it was the only nonprofit professional theatre in the state at the time, but such an argument merely underscores how seminal the Phoenix was.

This was the inaugural year for NYSCA,¹¹¹ and the Phoenix tour of Hamlet and Androcles and the Lion was the prominent feature of the Council's efforts. It lasted only one month, but covered twenty-five cities throughout the state, drawing over 37,000 people.¹¹² This bus and truck tour began in the city of Mineola on Long Island and included locations in the North East such as Plattsburgh and Canton and reached to the western corner of the state, playing in Niagara Falls, Buffalo, and Jamestown. It also played in a variety of spaces ranging from fully-equipped theatres to gymnasiums, and in all but two of the cities "it was the largest [production] that had been seen in over half a century."¹¹³ NYSCA provided \$95,000 toward the cost of the tour, but it reduced the figure to \$70,000 for the Phoenix tour of The Matchmaker the following year.¹¹⁴ After these two tours the Council moved toward less direct support by offering matching grants to communities that raised funds to support such tours. Recognizing the significance of this decision, Dick Netzer has written, "NYSCA initiated the matching-fund mode of operations subsequently adopted by NEA as its standard grant

procedure."¹¹⁵ Having experimented with the Phoenix in its first two years, NYSCA subsequently sponsored a variety of other theatres. Among them were the New York Shakespeare Festival, Circle in the Square, Equity Library Theatre, and the National Players.¹¹⁶ Other state arts councils have funded similar tours and NYSCA has been recognized for its early accomplishments;¹¹⁷ however, as with other ground-breaking efforts of the Phoenix, its involvement with the nation's first state-supported tours in 1963 and 1964 has gone unheralded.

While experimenting with such tours and pursuing other new markets for professional production, T. Edward Hambleton blazed many trails. Having no guides before him, he found that several of these trails, such as the Anderson Theatre Project, led to blind ways that were too threatening to win followers. Others, such as nonprofit status and the New York State tours led to fertile soil that attracted many settlers. Historians have taken note of longer lasting efforts such as those of Joseph Papp or more fully defined programs such as Herbert Blau's Actors Workshop but have paid little heed to Hambleton's efforts with the Phoenix. Regardless of what others suggest, in the late 1950s Hambleton was far from a waffling diletante in need of guidance and a strong resolve. With Norris Houghton he had formed the first post-war management in New York to revolt against the strictures of com-

mercial production and yet to retain an insistence upon offering a fair, if less than handsome, wage to the artists it employed. Hambleton had been instrumental in beginning the battle to overcome the commercialism of the New York stage. When he and Vaughan parted ways in 1963, Hambleton had only begun to fight. He had started ten years earlier, and he would continue for twenty more.

CHAPTER 5

THE REPERTORY MARKET

To point to a consistent, linear effort by Hambleton to develop a resident repertory company at the Phoenix during the early 1960s would be convenient for this chapter, but no such effort is manifested in the record of productions. After the high hopes surrounding the residency of Stuart Vaughan at the Twelfth Street Theatre had evaporated amidst the advent of the Lincoln Center Repertory Company, Hambleton moved the Phoenix to the much smaller 74th Street Theatre and announced a change in focus.¹ He proclaimed that the Phoenix would now concentrate on new plays, and during the three seasons beginning with 1961-62, the Phoenix offered several new works at the 74th Street Theatre: N. F. Simpson's One Way Pendulum (1961), Slawomir Mrozek's The Policemen (1961), Frank Gilroy's Who'll Save the Ploughboy? (1962), Arthur

Kopit's Oh Dad, Poor Dad, Mama's Hung You in the Closet, and I'm Feeling So Sad (1962), Eugene Schwarz's The Dragon (1963), Paul Klein and Fred Ebb's Morning Sun (1963), and James Saunders' Next Time I'll Sing to You (1963).

The announcement of the relocation and change to the production of new scripts was not so complete a break with Hambleton's past focus on revivals of classics as it might seem. He had begun the 1961-62 season by presenting the Stratford Festival of Canada's production of The Pirates of Penance at the Twelfth Street Theatre and then moved uptown to the 74th Street Theatre where, along with new plays, he mounted Shaw's The Dark Lady of the Sonnets and Androcles and the Lion. During the next season Hambleton augmented his production of new plays with revivals for high school audiences. He further proved his continued commitment to revivals at the end of the next season by presenting Ellis Rabb's Association of Producing Artists (hereafter APA) at 74th Street in a repertory of four revivals.

Therefore, although he had announced in 1961 that he would concentrate on new plays, the productions mounted at the 74th Street Theatre suggested an ongoing interest in revivals. Critics had taken note of the ambivalent nature of the Phoenix in previous years, and they would do so again. In 1982, Michael Feingold wrote a retrospective article about the Phoenix, and it he observed, "The most

exciting thing about the Phoenix was that you could never typecast it."² But that which Feingold found exciting others had found capricious, and Hambleton was sometimes accused of merely using the Phoenix as his personal toy.³

This criticism stems from the early years of the Phoenix, during which Hambleton personally invested a portion of the theatre's budget. When the Phoenix started as a limited partnership, he was merely one of many investors,⁴ but his contributions continued after the Phoenix had become nonprofit. At times of crisis Hambleton gave money to Theatre Incorporated through loans and outright gifts. The first such crisis took place in 1959 when the Phoenix was forced to abandon its announced season. To keep the theatre operating, Hambleton provided \$25,000 to underwrite production expenses for The Beaux' Stratagem. A precedent for Hambleton's largess had been set three months earlier when Roger Stevens and Robert W. Dowling, another realtor-cum-producer, had covered the cost of mounting The Power and the Glory.⁵

Hambleton's donations had the unfortunate result of branding him a dilettante in the eyes of the theatre world. John Wharton, the Chairman of the Board of Theatre Incorporated from 1957 until 1967, observed the same bias against Dwight Deere Wiman, a Broadway producer who hap-

pened to have inherited the tractor manufacturer's fortune. Wharton wrote:

He [Wiman] was all too frequently described by his Broadway peers as 'a talented amateur.' I ascribe this to the fact that in artistic circles--and this includes the critics, too--there is a feeling that rich people ought not to have any artistic ability; they should simply provide money for some poor, struggling genius to fulfill his promise.⁶

Throughout his career Hambleton was a victim of this bias, and both his diffident manner and his hands-off approach to producing enhanced the notion that he merely dabbled in the art of theatre and let others who were more capable create.⁷

The purposeful lack of definition that had been part of the original plan for the Phoenix later strengthened the impression that Hambleton was merely taking the Phoenix along on whatever adventure he might choose next. In 1953, when Hambleton and Houghton explained that the Phoenix would not be a part of Broadway's commercialism nor off-Broadway's amateurism, they intended to defy categorical definitions. Houghton claimed the approach taken was not so much a negative definition or a lack of definition as an attempt to avoid being pigeonholed.⁸ However, Stuart Little observed that Houghton, who had the academic background and who penned the early Phoenix press releases, had always seemed more anxious to define the Phoenix than had Hambleton.⁹ Later Houghton wrote:

Our zigzag course seemed willful and capricious, whisking from nineteenth-century tragedy to Restora-

tion comedy, from Jacobean to Ionesco, from musicals to Sideshow: it added up to no definable personality and to our critics revealed an absence of policy.¹⁰

The original plan for the Phoenix was Houghton's, and with his departure in 1959, Hambleton, who had offered few public pronouncements, took over the reigns of the Phoenix by default. He was still young and energetic, and the Phoenix, under the umbrella of Theatre Incorporated, was a ready-made production machine. It is logical that he would seize the opportunity to put the machine to use, and he did so.¹¹ From 1959 to 1961, his first two years as sole manager of the Phoenix, Hambleton attempted to build a repertory theatre at the Twelfth Street Theatre. After a three-year hiatus uptown at the 74th Street Theatre, he returned to the task in 1964.

The New York theatre had changed during the previous decade in that the dividing line between Broadway and off-Broadway was no longer clear. Broadway might not be offering revivals or consistently challenging material, but off-Broadway was now accepted as a professional venue. In the meantime, however, a new division had formed. Now there was a New York market and a regional market, and differences between the two were being drawn into sharp focus.¹² Eisenhower's fifties were gone, and Johnson's sixties had given rise to a more cynical national mood. Theatres established during the period reflected this mood, and "alternative" theatres now tended to take on a

more clearly "anti-establishment" character. Although the Alley Theatre and Arena Stage preceded this movement and Tyrone Guthrie created his apolitical Minnesota Theatre Company in 1963,¹³ many of the regional theatres that gained prominence during the 1960s clearly intended to work against traditional trends. Herbert Blau and Robert Brustein were among the heralds of the new alternative theatre. Blau's Actors Workshop had clear leftist leanings, and Brustein insisted that Yale Repertory Theatre would avoid interaction with commercial production. In contrast to the New York market, which they equated with Broadway, the stalwart bastion of theatre as show business, Blau and Brustein both regarded the nonprofit regional theatre as the only hope for theatre as art.¹⁴

Hambleton, who had worked amidst the commercial theatre from the beginning of his career, had never accepted this sense of division, and others agreed with him. Hume Cronyn, for example, wrote:

The third difficulty [of producing in Minneapolis] is the passionate advocacy or disparagement of Broadway on the one hand and of the regional theater on the other: "the New York theater is dead" vs. "who wants to get buried in the boondocks?" Why must it be either/or? Obviously, the two must become more closely related. The regional theater needs the support and stimulation of New York's theater artists and the day will come when repertory companies other than Michigan's APA--which has avoided the "regional" stigma--may appear with honor in New York. I don't know of a so-called regional production to date that can match the brilliance of the best of Broadway, but conversely there is no continuity of effort or standard in New York (and has not been since the days

of The Group Theater) that can match the best the regional theater has to offer. . . . Perhaps repertory or regional theater can suffer more disastrous influences than the taint of commercial experience.¹⁵

Like Cronyn, Hambleton never accepted this division.

Having managed the Phoenix as an institutional theatre amidst New York's commercialism, he was well aware of the tensions between the commercial and nonprofit sectors.¹⁶ Of all the nonprofit managers of the 1960s, he had the most first-hand experience in battling these tensions. Just as he had bridged the gap between the off-Broadway and Broadway markets during the 1950s, he worked throughout the 1960s and the first half of the 1970s to overcome the division between the nonprofit regional market and Broadway. In his refusal to accept the assumed separation between nonprofit and commercial production, he brought repertory to Broadway, a feat that the prestige, big names, and money behind the Lincoln Center Repertory Company could not accomplish.

Hambleton did not mean for the APA-Phoenix to be a regional theatre, nor did he intend it to be a Broadway theatre. He wanted it to be a repertory theatre that offered the quality of production associated with Broadway. He knew that the odds against attaining such a goal were appreciable, but these odds were no more overwhelming than the odds against producing professional work off-Broadway in 1953.

Through his collaboration with Ellis Rabb from 1964 to 1969, Hambleton attempted his boldest adventure into new markets. He had flirted with repertory during his last three years at the Twelfth Street Theatre, and now he would mount a much larger, more daring effort to establish repertory theatre--not just in New York but on Broadway. Hambleton proved his commitment to this cause when he continued to pursue resident repertory after the demise of the APA-Phoenix in 1969 and refused to abandon his plan until 1976. His twelve-year effort to put repertory on Broadway stands as one of the boldest efforts of the twentieth century to reclaim Broadway as an artistic venue.

This chapter examines Hambleton's attempt to overcome the division that other nonprofit managers were working to define and maintain. The discussion is offered in three parts, each of which explores an aspect of the new market Hambleton was forging. The first section, a description of Hambleton's efforts to establish repertory in New York, outlines his early attempt at repertory at the Twelfth Street Theatre in the late 1950s and examines his efforts with the APA-Phoenix (1964-69) and with the New Phoenix Repertory (1972-76).¹⁷ It examines the decisions surrounding the formation of the APA-Phoenix and of the New Phoenix Repertory and relates these decisions to Hambleton's previous policies, showing how they represent a

consistent vision that contrasts with the prevalent view that Hambleton demonstrated no overriding purpose in his endeavors. The second section is an evaluation of Hambleton's insistence upon maintaining a New York nonprofit market despite the strong national trend toward decentralization. The third section is an account of Hambleton's efforts to provide funding through the transfer of successful productions to commercial settings--either tours or Broadway runs.

When they opened the Phoenix in 1953, Hambleton and Houghton announced that they did not intend to play in repertory or to create a permanent company. Despite these statements, comparisons of the Phoenix to Eva Le Gallienne's Civic Repertory Theatre and to the repertory theatres of Europe circulated immediately.¹⁸ The comparisons surfaced again when Theatre Incorporated approved a proposal for a permanent company at the Phoenix in 1957. The first page of the proposal observed that the United States had no theatres comparable to the Old Vic, the Moscow Art, the Abbey, or the Comédie Française. It went on to note that this was the only country with "no institutional theatre to perform classics at home and represent it on the world stage."¹⁹ With this proposal the Phoenix was finally inviting the comparisons, but the announcement came when excitement over repertory was brewing elsewhere.

Repertory was a catchword of the day. Late in 1956 the Lincoln Center project announced the formation of a Committee on Drama, chaired by George Stoddard, who had helped form the American Shakespeare Festival in Stratford, Connecticut. He was a champion of repertory and was encouraged by Brooks Atkinson and Walter Kerr to form a repertory theatre at Lincoln Center.²⁰ On 26 April 1958, Vivian Beaumont Allen donated \$3,000,000 to the undertaking. This momentous event prompted Theatre Arts to publish a two-part examination of repertory in New York during the twentieth century.²¹ The articles looked back to the rise and fall of Eva Le Gallienne's Civic Repertory and forward to the grand scheme of the Lincoln Center project. The fledgling efforts at the Phoenix were inconsequential in comparison. Although the Phoenix had a theatre and was building an acting company, it drew little attention and attracted no substantial donations. Lincoln Center had offered no date for beginning operations and would not produce its first play for five years; yet, it was overshadowing Hambleton's efforts to bring repertory to New York.

It was no secret to Hambleton that money was a key issue. His experience with the limited partnership at the Phoenix had proven that an institutional theatre would not be self-sustaining. In contrast to MacNeil Lowry's assumption that nonprofit theatres could be self-

supporting, Hambleton knew that he would face an operating deficit--not just occasionally, but each year.²² Even though he had a more realistic view of the financial reality of nonprofit operation than those who followed him, he had reason for optimism. The Phoenix' revivals had attracted the attention and enthusiasm of Tyrone Guthrie, who considered the Phoenix the most hopeful landmark on the American theatre's horizon.²³ With such a major figure championing their cause, Hambleton felt that they could secure the funding needed to bring the plan to fruition.

Hambleton was further encouraged by the strong support that had been shown for Lawrence Langner's American Shakespeare Festival. The Rockefeller and Old Dominion Foundations had both provided \$300,000 before the festival had even opened its first season in 1953.²⁴ If a theatre not yet in existence could raise that much money, how much might the Phoenix raise with its reputation for high-quality revivals of classics and its proven track record? By March 1957 Theatre Incorporated had decided to hire a professional fund raiser and to approach foundations for support.²⁵ Three months later Hambleton had received the first of many refusals from foundations. He reported to the board of directors that the Rockefeller Foundation would give nothing to the arts that year and that the Ford Foundation had "expressed slight and limited interest."²⁶

Undaunted, Hambleton plunged ahead and fought for three years to establish a resident repertory company at the Twelfth Street Theatre without foundation support.

Comments made by John Wharton, the Chairman of the Board for Theatre Incorporated, in January 1961 help to summarize the talk that had circulated about repertory and the inaction that had accompanied the talk. He wrote:

About five years ago the repertory idea suddenly bloomed again and became the pet idea of many wealthy people who somehow never got the idea off the ground but gave false hopes to ambitious producers. I think I had three different proposals in my office alone--all of which started with promise of support but died a-blooming. The New York Chapter of ANTA filled their publication with eulogies of repertory. Lincoln Center raised \$3,000,000 to build a Repertory Theatre (which is now budgeted at \$7,000,000 to \$10,000,000); Messrs. Whitehead and Kazan announced their devotion to the notion. The Phoenix actually tried it.²⁷

Although the decision to establish a resident company at the Twelfth Street Theatre during the late 1950s seemed to address the pleas that had been prominent for such and action, it also ran afoul of the powerful forces that were trying to establish the Lincoln Center Repertory Company. When Whitehead and Kazan finally announced the opening season, they also announced that construction of the Vivian Beaumont would not be completed in time for their opening. To solve this problem they would open at the temporary Washington Square theatre that ANTA was helping to build several blocks from the Phoenix. New York was a big town, but it was not big enough for two repertory com-

panies (at least, no one--including Hambleton--thought so at the time). Hambleton remembers that it was impossible to continue with the permanent company at the Twelfth Street Theatre, and he later specifically identified Lincoln Center as the reason. He wrote:

By 1960 the shadow of the yet to be seen Lincoln Center Repertory Company was growing long and adding a whole new dimension to the difficulties of fund raising. Our supporters and potential supporters echoed a chorus that said simply "there is only room for one repertory company in New York City and that can only be at Lincoln Center." We never agreed, but it mattered little---the tide was running out at 12th Street and it was running in at Lincoln Center. The ANTA Washington Square Theatre was to be ready in 1962 for the Lincoln Center Repertory Company.²⁸

During the summer of 1961, after it had become clear that his first attempt at repertory had failed, Hambleton wrote an article that stressed the value of the Lincoln Center undertaking. He acknowledged that the Phoenix' effort at repertory had fallen far short of the goal he had hoped to attain. In three years of work with a permanent company, the Phoenix had managed to offer only two productions in repertory, Henry IV, parts 1 and 2. Of this experiment, he said:

. . . it was only a beginning and was feasible because the same set, and in some instances the same costumes, were usable. Nor did it require the large company necessary for a more varied repertory of plays."²⁹

He followed this statement with an outline of the objectives of a successful repertory company: attract and retain an audience, satisfy actors, hire a talented

artistic director, keep ticket prices low, maintain subscriptions, attract significant foundation and private support. Hambleton had not attained these goals in his final three seasons at the Twelfth Street Theatre. The advent of Lincoln Center had made fund raising impossible, and reliance upon ticket sales had resulted in consistent losses. The Phoenix had failed to find a large enough audience to support a house the size of the Twelfth Street Theatre.³⁰ He offered Whitehead and Kazan his best wishes and retired uptown to the 74th Street theatre, apparently accepting defeat. However, his efforts at repertory were to lie dormant for only a few seasons and would emerge again during the spring of 1964.

The 1963-64 season was a momentous one in the history of American theatre. Repertory took hold in Minneapolis and Seattle,³¹ but the fledgling efforts of the Lincoln Center Repertory Company that opened its doors that season cast doubt about whether New York was likely to have a resident repertory troupe in the immediate future. The Lincoln Center season was offered as a sequence of limited runs, and its board of directors seemed impatient for success.³² Despite this situation the prevailing assumption was that if repertory was possible in New York, only Lincoln Center could make it happen. Hambleton had accepted this assumption in 1961 when he left the Twelfth Street Theatre, but within three years he began to challenge its

validity. Ellis Rabb's APA had performed briefly in repertory off-Broadway at the Folksbiene Theatre in 1962 but had not returned to New York since that time. During the spring of 1964, Hambleton arranged for the APA to appear at the Phoenix, presenting Pirandello's Right You Are, George M. Cohen's The Tavern, Molière's Impromptu at Versailles and Scapin, and Gorki's The Lower Depths in repertory.

Hambleton had known Ellis Rabb and his work since the mid-1950s when Rabb had played minor roles in productions at the Phoenix.³³ Rabb had formed the APA in 1960 and had led it through an itinerant existence since that time. The troupe established short residencies in a variety of cities, performing in whatever theatres it could come to terms with.³⁴ By 1964 the APA was gaining a reputation for strong ensemble playing. Hambleton, eager to continue his effort to establish repertory in New York, offered Rabb the Phoenix as a New York base for the APA. In the fall of 1964 Hambleton wrote to Rabb:

I believe . . . that the Phoenix has a critical decision to make as to whether it proceeds with APA toward the development of a theatre which has always been the Phoenix dream or whether the Phoenix decides that "one repertory theatre in New York is enough." I believe APA has something of the same decision.³⁵

Rabb had indicated a strong interest in collaboration a week earlier. In a 4 November 1964 memo to Hambleton he stated that he wanted to bill the APA's appearance at Ann

Arbor as an "engagement" instead of a "season" in order to emphasize that the APA was committed to establishing the Phoenix in New York as its base.³⁶ Rabb remained cautious, though, and was wary of yielding too much power to Hambleton. Protracted negotiations were needed to assure Rabb of his autonomy. A later letter to Rabb not only reveals the nature of these negotiations but also explains the structure and goals of what was to become the APA-Phoenix.³⁷ Hambleton wrote:

These past three years have given me a firm conviction, firmer than I have ever had before, of what my contribution to the theatre could be, and as you may have realized much of this can be directly ascribed to you. Much of what I consider to be the major premise is your thinking. I may have tampered with it inadvertently but not intentionally. As I understand it this is it: the only reason to form a repertory company in New York City is that it be of such quality that it be the measure for the entire country and eventually for the world. There is nothing easy about forming such a company in the competition which New York provides, but it is exactly this competition that will finally make this possible. We have had some experience in difficulties of recruiting the necessary artists and staff and the necessary support. Our record of last season and of this has continued to improve the matter of support to the point where I believe I can show you the support we require. However, this support must rest on a plan that is capable of attracting the artists and staff that we need to form such a theatre. We have in you the Artistic Director capable of providing the leadership needed to accomplish this, provided that you and I can work out a plan that will allow us together to form, according to our own best judgment, a company which in time will meet the standards we have set. I think you understand that I believe that given such a plan we can find the support. Such a framework as I seek to provide the structure for the company must satisfy two primary conditions. First, it must be sufficiently flexible that it can follow your wishes. (Let me try and define our separate functions here: If you are

navigating or charting the course, I am arguing with you [questioning you from time to time] certainly, but I am mainly concerned with how we can achieve the course which you chart with my advice. When it comes time to execute the course, then it is your job to provide the tactical direction and mine to act as a kind of gyroscope to keep the boat steady.) Second, it must be sufficiently viable to allow you or me to take some time off without losing the momentum or providing our staff with any opportunity to conclude that the captain has left the ship. You have suggested at various times that the structure be such as to allow you to direct independently or take time to rest, etc., but this requires an approved design that others can follow and the authority vested in the proper individual to cope with day-to-day and week-to-week problems.

Aside from elucidating Hambleton's ambition to create world-class repertory on Broadway, this letter addresses two points that are central to an understanding of what ensued during the rise and fall of the APA-Phoenix in the coming years. The first was their commitment to a New York base of operation. The second was the need to define the structure of the organization--the relationship between Hambleton as head of the Phoenix and Rabb as head of the APA. As will be shown later, this issue was never properly resolved and eventually led to the dissolution of the APA-Phoenix.

The commitment to the New York market, however, was never in question. Hambleton believed that the competitive force of the New York market would be a strength instead of a liability, and Rabb felt that the APA was a New York company that should "come home."³⁸ As a result, the APA-Phoenix remained in New York despite the national

trend toward decentralization. The toughness of the New York market piqued Hambleton's interest in creating work of the highest standard, a consistent focus throughout his career. He had insisted upon high production standards even as a novice in the 1930s when he hired experienced artists to work with the resident company at Theatre-by-the-Sea, and in 1947 his production of Galileo with Charles Laughton had met with adverse criticism for being too professional to warrant production under the umbrella of ANTA's Experimental Theatre. Similar criticism surfaced again ten years later when Hambleton and Houghton complained about union stipulations that restricted their rehearsal period to four weeks. Albert Bermel observed that four weeks might not be adequate for Broadway's "line-perfect, timing-perfect performance," but, Bermel argued, it was adequate for what the Phoenix should be trying to accomplish.³⁹

Hambleton never felt obliged to accept limitations assumed to be appropriate by others. He had not done so in the fifties, and he would not do so in the sixties. He was convinced that with Rabb he could do what Lincoln Center had not done: provide the repertory company that New York had dreamed of for nearly a decade. First, he determined that they had to move to a larger theatre. Although they had done capacity business at the 74th Street Theatre during the 1964-65 season, with only 299

seats the house offered limited income. In exploring potential new homes, both Hambleton and Rabb decided that the Lyceum Theatre was the best possible choice. All they needed now was funding, but this presented a problem.

Despite Hambleton's optimism, few others seemed to believe that repertory on Broadway was feasible. As of June 1965, the largest foundation grant in the Theatre Incorporated coffers was one from the CBS Foundation for \$5,000, and Hambleton's bid for a Ford Foundation grant was turned down.⁴⁰ Lacking the funds needed to accomplish his ends, Hambleton scraped together enough money to mount the APA-Phoenix production of You Can't Take It With You on Broadway. This assured him of keeping the company in the public eye while he continued to ferret out the needed resources. In 1958 he had gone ahead with his plans to form a permanent company at the Twelfth Street Theatre without Ford Foundation funds, and the Foundation backed the idea after it was in place. He once again moved ahead without the foundation's support. This time it took the Ford Foundation longer to come through, but it finally provided a substantial grant in June 1967, a full season after the APA-Phoenix had established itself at the Lyceum.⁴¹

The plan that brought repertory to Broadway was complex, and it reflected Hambleton's belief that to meet the demands of the New York critics, each production had to

have time in front of audiences to be fine-tuned. By April 1966 the plan was in place. The repertory would start its season in July with four plays in Los Angeles. In September it would move to Ann Arbor, and come to New York in late November. The theatres in Los Angeles and Ann Arbor offered substantial guarantees which allowed the new productions to be worked into the schedule without undue risk of box office failure.⁴² The season in New York would include seven productions, four of which would be part of the subscription season.

Though carefully thought out, this plan did not prove workable. Regardless of efforts to keep costs within reason, the season in New York was proving ruinous.⁴³ Though deficits continued to rise throughout the three seasons that the APA-Phoenix played at the Lyceum, Hambleton worked tirelessly to meet the rising demand for money. It is doubtful that he could have managed to meet the debt that continued to spiral upward, but a major part of his plan was thwarted by Rabb's resistance to a large subscription audience for the Lyceum season. This resistance was an outgrowth of a conflict that had existed within the organization since Rabb and Hambleton had formalized joint operations in 1965.

Despite efforts by both Hambleton and Rabb to elucidate their positions, the definition of their roles was never fully clarified. Rabb's reluctance to cede con-

trol remained a major obstacle to fruitful collaboration throughout the association of the two organizations, and his reserve was well-founded. Hambleton had asked him to commit the APA to a merger from which it could not easily extricate itself. Prior to its association with the Phoenix the APA had been a service organization that could offer its wares to all bidders and could avoid any contract it deemed unattractive. Rabb had functioned as both the artistic and administrative head of the company. When he finally accepted Hambleton's offer, he freed himself of administrative burdens but he also relinquished a great deal of control. He did not want the APA to be swallowed by the Phoenix and saw to it that a clear division remained between the two.⁴⁴ The contract between them stipulated that Theatre Incorporated was solely responsible for financing the joint endeavor and that, upon parting, the APA would retain all items of production, including costumes and sets.⁴⁵ When the APA and the Phoenix finally did part in 1969, Theatre Incorporated assumed responsibility for the entire deficit of \$750,000.⁴⁶

Although the agreement clearly stated that Rabb had artistic control and that the APA was cleared of all financial responsibility, it did not specify that Rabb could not intervene in administrative matters. Rabb constantly argued that administrative costs were too high and

was particularly troubled by the expense entailed in fund raising and by Hambleton's insistence upon a strong subscription audience. Rabb felt that subscriptions sales limited artistic flexibility. In October 1968 he wrote Hambleton a letter in which he requested the dismissal of all fund raising personnel. He wrote:

I think the funds must be raised entirely through you and our friends, their connections and their imaginations. I think the subscription department should now be simplified in terms of immediate expense. Obviously we must have a staff to carry out the current commitments to the existing subscribers, but the staff should only be large enough to handle this season's needs. As you know too well I am against any system that locks us into numbers of plays, numbers of performances of them, or opening dates. I know all the arguments against this attitude as a lack of necessary discipline, etc. But I maintain that there is a better and more effective and less fallible way to sell tickets in advance to gain front money and still accommodate the artistic life of such a company.⁴⁷

Although Rabb's objection to any paid staff for fund raising seems ill-informed, his objection to the subscription audience can be justified in that he felt the subscription sales placed onerous obligations upon the company. He believed that the APA-Phoenix could win a popular audience, and that the number of performances for each play should be determined by its audience appeal rather than by the number of subscriptions sold.⁴⁸ Each year Hambleton requested a plan for the coming season far in advance so as to promote subscriptions, and Rabb continuously put off providing the plan.⁴⁹

In his discussion of subscriptions, Danny Newman, who travelled to a variety of theatres in order to promote subscriptions, points to the APA-Phoenix as a prime example of an approach to subscriptions that guarantees extinction. He does not mention the name of the theatre, but he comments:

Night after night, brilliant performances of such fine, serious, but little-known plays as Ionesco's Exit the King and de Ghelderode's Pantagleize were greeted most enthusiastically by the subscribers, but all the millions comprising the rest of the city's metropolitan population produced a pitiful number of those adventurous single-ticket buyers. Many more purchasers of individual tickets turned out for another of the plays the company produced that season, but that one--George Kelly's The Show-Off--provided them with light entertainment and Helen Hayes in a central role, and did not require the same spirit of adventure on the audience's part. . . . A leading critic berated the area's theatergoers for their indifference, not knowing that a great many of them would have gladly subscribed and gone regularly if the company had not purposely limited the scale of its season-ticket promotion.⁵⁰

Newman's description of the APA-Phoenix' policy is a summary of Rabb's perspective concerning subscription sales. Hambleton, on the other hand, had worked consistently to maximize subscriptions. In 1965 he stressed to Rabb that a central part of his plan was to increase subscriptions from 7,000 to 20,000.⁵¹ Newman visited the APA-Phoenix in 1968, and Hambleton followed up the visit with an effort to re-establish the commitment to subscriptions that he had convinced Theatre Incorporated to embrace in 1958. He wrote:

Whereas every resident theatre of the U. S. [has] made subscriptions a backbone of its economic solution, and Lincoln Center [has] managed to save its skin with subscriptions, we have in effect turned our back for artistic reasons on this phenomenon and allowed the subscriptions to represent only about 30% of our capacity.⁵²

Rabb had insisted that fund raising be eliminated from the budget and that the subscription staff be dismissed in October 1968, but in February Hambleton set the goal for the coming year's subscriptions at 25,000.⁵³ Clearly, the differences remained unresolved.

It is doubtful that the APA-Phoenix could have continued to operate even if Hambleton had convinced Rabb to embrace full subscription. The problem with the APA-Phoenix was that it had simply grown too large. The board had proven that it could not raise more than \$750,000 a year to offset costs, and even with reduced New York seasons and expanded out-of-town seasons, the deficit continued to grow. Hambleton and Theatre Incorporated simply could not effectively raise the funds that the operation demanded, and in 1968, facing budgetary restraints, the National Endowment for the Arts (hereafter NEA) canceled a \$250,000 grant. Although a few critics claimed that the NEA's action doomed the APA-Phoenix, the loss of a single grant, even of such magnitude, can hardly be seen as the single factor that doomed the APA-Phoenix to failure.⁵⁴

The demands created by yearly engagements in Los Angeles, Ann Arbor, Toronto, Chicago, and New York also

took their toll on Ellis Rabb. Rabb was above all an actor and a director, not an administrator. He could devise a workable scheme for a production and create a well-balanced season of plays, but he could never effectively create the long range plans that Hambleton was requesting. At times of crisis he tended to withdraw,⁵⁵ and the final season of the APA-Phoenix was fraught with crisis. Critical and audience response had cooled; the deficit threatened to top one million dollars; and Rabb and Rosemary Harris were in the midst of divorce proceedings.

Unfortunately, divisiveness within the ranks of the APA had grown so strong that the company could not manage to continue after the dissolution of the APA-Phoenix.⁵⁶ Hambleton, buoyant as ever, immediately set up contingency plans and refused to accept defeat. Six weeks after the announcement that the APA-Phoenix would cease operations, Hambleton insisted that repertory was still viable. He told Lewis Funke: "The momentum we had here was a great thing. I don't think the end of the APA-Phoenix, by any means, is the kiss of death for a resident repertory company here."⁵⁷

Despite his optimism, Hambleton had once again seen his efforts thwarted, and the Phoenix was at another of its low points. Saddled with debt and adrift without a permanent company, the Phoenix was ripe for another of

Hambleton's redefinitions. The Phoenix could not continue in the direction it had gone with the APA for several reasons. First, no resident company was available: the only company in the nation comparable to the APA was William Ball's Actors Conservatory Theatre, which was firmly ensconced in San Francisco.⁵⁸ After what had happened with the APA, Hambleton knew that he was unlikely to attract a company to New York. Furthermore, an association with an equally well-established troupe would only lead to similar problems over control. The financial picture could not have been more gloomy and presented another major obstacle. The deficit was \$750,000, and any operation approaching the size of the APA-Phoenix would be impossible to fund. Foundation help was very unlikely to reappear; the Ford Foundation had made it clear to Hambleton when it offered its 1966 grant that it considered repertory in New York unproven,⁵⁹ and the demise of the APA-Phoenix suggested that the Foundation's qualms had been well-founded. By any realistic estimate, the chances of survival were bleak, and the most logical choice was to fold.

Hambleton was determined to prevent this from happening and began immediately to find ways to continue. To buy time he produced Harvey for an extended run with Helen Hayes and Jimmy Stewart in the cast.⁶⁰ This gave Hambleton time to get his bearings and decide what direction

the Phoenix should move. One possible choice was to reemphasize the Phoenix' commitment to education. Certainly money was available from foundations and from government for education programs, and it appeared for some time that this was precisely the direction the Phoenix would move. Steven Benedict of the Rockefeller Brothers Fund suggested that Hambleton contact a young director named Gordon Duffey,⁶¹ who had created street theatre workshops through the New York City Department of Parks and Recreation.⁶² Hambleton convinced the board of Theatre Incorporated to appropriate the funds needed to explore the feasibility of a youth-oriented program.⁶³

At the same time there were indications that the Phoenix would not limit itself to education projects. In addition to Harvey on Broadway, the Phoenix mounted two productions off-Broadway: José Triana's The Criminals and a recent adaptation of Aeschylus' The Persians. Hambleton's comments on the Phoenix efforts during the season indicate the trouble he was having determining the best course of action. In February 1970 he said:

We feel we have a definite place in the future of the theater. Basically, we have the same feeling that Norrie and I had when we started the Phoenix. We feel the theater here desperately needs a place where a climate can be created in which the artists can work. Our major aim now is to adapt to the 70's. . . . We're not going to settle in a theater, not for a while, if ever again. And, considering our experience during the last few years with the APA, no one is going to be surprised if we do not form a company. The costs are prohibitive. Perhaps, in time, with more government

aid--on the federal, state, and local levels--that might be possible.⁶⁴

Hambleton had never been particularly adept at clear statements of purpose, and this one further confirmed that the Phoenix was floundering. However, his ability to provide continuity as a manager was again in evidence by the spring of 1972 when he had the Phoenix back on the repertory track.

Following a plan he had first outlined the month after the APA-Phoenix had been dissolved,⁶⁵ Hambleton announced Harold Prince, Stephen Porter, and Michael Montel as a triumvirate of artistic directors for the New Phoenix Repertory. Prince was to direct O'Neill's Great God Brown, Porter was to direct Molière's Don Juan, and Montel was to function as the casting director and to direct a new series of "Sideshows" that concentrated on developing work. Once again Hambleton was mixing the commercial and nonprofit worlds, and his announcement took Broadway by surprise. Porter and Montel had solid nonprofit credentials. Stephen Porter was certainly capable of handling Molière. His history as a director for the defunct APA suggested that in choosing him Hambleton was on safe ground.⁶⁶ Michael Montel, with five years experience as the casting director at the New Theatre for Now of the Mark Taper Forum, seemed a safe choice. But Harold Prince was a producer and director of musicals, not a director of

serious theatre. Did Hambleton actually expect Harold Prince to direct O'Neill?⁶⁷ This was not the first time that Hambleton had challenged the stagnant thinking that type-cast directors and producers as well as actors. His faith in Prince's directing abilities dated back to 1962 when he had hired Prince to direct The Matchmaker for the Phoenix' second New York state tour.⁶⁸ Hambleton had also provided Jerome Robbins with his first chance to direct a straight play during the same year, when he offered Robbins Oh Dad.

Hambleton's desire to overcome the division between the commercial and nonprofit markets was evinced in more substantial ways than his selection of Prince. His new plan resembled the operation of the APA-Phoenix in using out-of-town engagements to prepare for a New York repertory season, but it departed noticeably from the APA-Phoenix strategy. Instead of establishing residences in a few cities, the New Phoenix Repertory prepared for its New York season with a schedule akin to the old Broadway tryout circuit, a strategy that bridged the nonprofit and commercial markets. The two stops prior to New York would be split between a university and a commercial house.⁶⁹ The season would start in residence at the University of Pennsylvania, where the company would mount its productions, offer master classes to university students, and provide the opportunity for students to work with a

professional company.⁷⁰ From Philadelphia, the company would move to Boston where it would enjoy the luxury of a Theatre Guild subscription audience that provided a \$20,000 guarantee per week.⁷¹ After this two-stop tryout, the troupe would come to New York for a short repertory season and finish with a tour of colleges and universities.

The limited repertoire that Hambleton proposed also contrasted starkly with the APA-Phoenix plan. During the first year, the New Phoenix Repertory offered only two main stage productions, and during the next two seasons it offered three. The APA-Phoenix had always offered six or seven shows in the New York season, with four of them being part of the subscription series. It had usually added three new productions each year to its repertoire, and each new production had cost \$100,000 to mount.⁷² In contrast, the Theatre Incorporated Board agreed to hold the total annual budget for the New Phoenix Repertory at \$500,000.⁷³

The plan was designed to control costs, and Hambleton intended to have the pre-New York portion of the season pay for itself.⁷⁴ Early indications suggested that the plan might prove fruitful. Unlike the APA-Phoenix, the New Phoenix Repertory managed to stay much closer to its budget, and Hambleton's choice of bridging the nonprofit-commercial gap seemed to be winning support. In the

second year it won substantial grants from NEA and NYSCA.⁷⁵

During the first season the Phoenix had also found a summer home. The John Drew Theatre in East Hampton presented the New Phoenix Repertory for six weeks each summer during the next three seasons. This arrangement provided continuity, insuring that company members did not have to leave to find summer work. The John Drew Theatre also paid Theatre Incorporated a guarantee that covered the overhead of retaining administrative staff during the summer.⁷⁶

Despite these hopeful signs three problems had to be to addressed. First, even with reduced overhead and production costs, the New York season continued to lose money, and the deficit was once again beginning to grow.⁷⁷ Second, Harold Prince was leaving. He had agreed to a three year effort and would return his full attention to commercial projects after the 1974-75 season. Last, the Phoenix lost its production base in Philadelphia when the University of Pennsylvania canceled funding for the Annenberg Center.⁷⁸

Even with these setbacks, the Board of Theatre Incorporated remained squarely behind Hambleton's desire to retain a permanent company and to operate in repertory.⁷⁹ Over the past ten years both features had become Phoenix trademarks that set it apart from all other

theatres in the city. The Phoenix had abandoned its repertory schedule in New York in the 1974-75 season and presented its plays in succession. In assessing this decision, Hambleton decided that the strategy had backfired and that reviews had been less favorable because the shows were not offered in repertory. Single ticket sales had actually fallen off by 5,000 from the previous year, further indicating that the switch away from the repertory schedule had not worked.⁸⁰ To accommodate the obligation to stay in New York and to offer shows in repertory, Hambleton revised his plan yet again. Having lost its base at the University of Pennsylvania, the Phoenix would once again operate solely in New York and on Broadway but this time in a smaller house--the Playhouse on 48th Street, which seated 499. To further limit costs, the season would be mounted in two segments. The first would offer two one acts, Memory of Two Mondays and 27 Wagonloads of Cotton, in repertory with Sidney Howard's They Knew What They Wanted. The second would offer William Gillette's Secret Service and Bella and Sam Spewack's Boy Meets Girl in repertory. This would not only reduce the cost of storage but would also cut back on the number of stage hands required to handle changeovers.⁸¹

Although critical response to the season was favorable, after one season under this modified plan, the deficit had jumped to \$275,000.⁸² An additional blow came

in January 1976 when Hambleton learned that the John Drew Theatre in East Hampton had decided to present modestly produced musicals, which meant the Phoenix had lost its summer home.⁸³ Facing what was obviously yet another series of growing deficits and having no means of providing the summer employment that would hold the company together, Hambleton finally abandoned his effort to provide repertory on Broadway. He had started the effort nineteen years earlier and had modified his plan continuously, but he now had to admit defeat. If the Phoenix was to continue, it would have to pursue a different focus.

Hambleton's stubborn refusal to abandon New York ran counter to the trend of the period. While New York had resisted his efforts to establish a resident theatre over a twenty-year span, regional theatres in other cities had flourished. The Guthrie Theatre, a highly visible example of success, had emerged full-bloom in 1963 and had remained committed to repertory schedules with permanent companies.⁸⁴ The first strides toward decentralization, however, predated the Guthrie by over a decade and came through the work of Nina Vance in Houston, Zelda Fichandler in Washington D.C., and Herbert Blau and Jules Irving in San Francisco; and their efforts were later augmented by funding from the Ford Foundation in the 1960s.⁸⁵

Throughout this period Hambleton worked against the flow of events and was determined to stay in New York even though the flow of energy and talent was now away from New York. Stuart Vaughan was among the those who chose to abandon New York for the regional market. In 1961 he had told Hambleton that he had lost interest in resident companies, and he left the Phoenix;⁸⁶ two years later, however, his interest reawakened 3,000 miles away, where he founded the Seattle Repertory Theatre. In 1965, the Rockefeller Panel Report proclaimed its support of decentralization and called for fifty permanent professional theatres throughout the nation, roughly one for each metropolis totaling over 500,000 in population.⁸⁷ Further proof of the march away from New York is evident in the pages of Best Plays which expanded its coverage of regional productions a great deal during the early 1960s. In 1960-61 it covered only the seasons in New York and Chicago, but by 1965-66 it had added reports on Minneapolis, Seattle, Los Angeles, Houston, Dallas, Boston, San Francisco, and Washington. The Phoenix had helped to establish off-Broadway as an mainstream alternative to Broadway, and Off-Broadway had become legitimate. Now the regional theatres were shedding their "little theatre" skins and redefining themselves as mainstream theatres. They, too, wished to legitimize themselves, and to do so

they subjected their work to the scrutiny of New York critics.⁸⁸

The New York critics proved quite unreceptive to the notion that regional theatre could actually compare to the work done on Broadway. In 1965 Theodore Hoffman, who had just been appointed head of New York University's School of the Arts, felt that New York critics tended to view regional theatres as a form of community theatre.⁸⁹ The following year Otis R. Guernsey noted that the regional theatres were producing no new scripts and observed: "The regional theater's playscripts . . . are gestated the hard way in New York. To change the metaphor a little, the regional theater is nursing lustily on Broadway and is a long, long way from being weaned. If New York goes dry, the regional theater must starve or worse."⁹⁰

Guernsey was not the only critic to show such bias in favor of Broadway and against institutional theatre. Stuart Vaughan was amazed at the general tone of the New York critics toward the Phoenix when it first tried to establish a resident company in 1958. He wrote:

With The Family Reunion at the Phoenix, I met for the first time the critical resistance to institutional theatre--an attitude which dogged Lincoln Center's theatre, from Kazan-Whitehead through the even less fortunate Blau-Irving regime. Something sadistic comes over newspapermen when they attend a theatre of decent size to view productions of reasonable expenditure, where the plays are avowedly chosen in relation to a "policy."

The announcement of a scheduled season, the engagement of a company, the sale of subscriptions,

the enunciation of a policy all led the critics to take a "show me" attitude. Perhaps critics liked to be in on the making of a hit and resented the stability which kept institutional theatre from seeming like a horse race.⁹¹

The challenge presented by the New York press is best demonstrated by examining the fate that met Herbert Blau and Jules Irving's endeavor when they moved from San Francisco to Lincoln Center in 1965. The Actors Workshop had met with consistent success and encouragement during the fourteen years that it had operated in San Francisco. It had won warm praise from the city of San Francisco but had also received a good deal of attention from the press and critics, most notably Richard Schechner. The special difficulties of assuming the yoke of Lincoln Center might account for a good deal of what Blau and Irving experienced, but they also faced a hostile press. Blau's manifesto, The Impossible Theatre, had been published just the year before, and it antagonized the very people who would be judging his work at Lincoln Center.⁹² Even Robert Brustein, who was sympathetic to Blau's efforts, later admitted to being impatient to see results.⁹³

Blau left in 1966, and Irving found that the commitment to resident repertory that had been feasible in San Francisco had to be abandoned in New York. Meanwhile resident repertory was blooming again in San Francisco with the city's warm acceptance of William Ball's Actors Conservatory Theatre. Irving knew that working in

repertory mandated risks, and he learned that in New York the cost of taking those risks was simply too high. He observed:

Whitehead and Kazan spoke of the virtue of a repertory theater, as contrasted with Broadway, as being an institution in which you could invoke the right to fail. I have come to realize that one does not have that luxury in New York. If one invokes the right to fail here, one has to take the consequences of failure--which is [sic] extinction.⁹⁴

Amidst the pressures of the New York market Irving was forced to move in a direction opposite that which Hambleton was taking with the Phoenix. During the late 1960s Hambleton continued to fight for repertory on Broadway while Irving relinquished the concept of the resident troupe. Instead, he resorted to the casting strategy that the Phoenix had used in its first years and that Circle in the Square would later claim to have invented.⁹⁵ Irving used a policy of limited runs as a lure to attract top talent to challenging roles that Broadway and film did not provide.⁹⁶

Casting continued to be a problem for the institutional theatre in New York, but there were other difficulties as well. Lack of foundation support was a major obstacle for anyone attempting to run a nonprofit theatre in New York in the 1960s. Hambleton had brought the first Ford Foundation grant to New York in 1959, but McNeil Lowry viewed this award as an exception to the Ford allegiance to decentralization.⁹⁷ After Hambleton's bid

for a resident company faltered in 1961, the Phoenix was simply not pursuing the type of program that the Ford Foundation wanted to fund. The Phoenix was not in need of a new building and was not contributing to the decentralization of the American theatre. If Hambleton was going to put his efforts into mounting new plays with occasional nods at revivals, he would have to finance his operation without foundation help. In general, off-Broadway was ignored by the foundations in the early 1960s, especially when compared to the large number of grants offered to theatres outside New York. Aside from the Phoenix (\$120,000 in 1959) and the Actors Studio (\$250,000 in 1962), the Ford Foundation offered no New York theatre a grant until it gave the American Place \$225,000 in 1964. By comparison, during the same time span Ford gave nearly one million dollars to Arena Stage and well over two million dollars to the Alley Theatre. Clearly, the Ford Foundation did not feel that off-Broadway was the wave of the future, and off-Broadway managers continued to complain that their efforts were being ignored by the foundations.⁹⁸

Ironically, it was in 1965 when Hambleton was creating the APA-Phoenix, a program much closer to the goals of the Ford Foundation, that he received his most widely publicized refusal from Ford.⁹⁹ He had been offering the APA in repertory at 74th Street for two seasons when he

applied to Ford for a grant that would allow the operation to move to the Lyceum Theatre, finally putting to its intended use the one theatre in New York that had been designed for repertory.¹⁰⁰ Although the APA was not a resident theatre in that it had no specific home, it had created an encampment at the University of Michigan and with Hambleton's help was also establishing a base at the Huntington Hartford Theatre in Los Angeles. Furthermore, of all the nonprofit theatres, it had the largest core of loyal actors. Negotiations with Ford had progressed to the point that both Rabb and Hambleton felt assured of approval, but the approval did not come through. An examination of the amount of money involved indicates the reservation of the Ford Foundation. The total grant was to be \$650,000 over a five year period. Although that was an appreciable sum, it paled in comparison to the above subsidies given to resident theatres outside New York. Hambleton's correspondence with Rabb suggests that part of the problem may have been confusion caused by changes in staff at Ford.¹⁰¹ More importantly, he points out that the Ford Foundation really had no understanding of the New York market or true repertory settings.¹⁰²

Four years later, the APA-Phoenix had dissolved, and Hambleton had to relinquish the second grant that he had wrestled from the Ford Foundation. From 1965 to 1969 the New York season had been the most expensive, and therefore

least tenable, aspect of the APA-Phoenix operation, but Hambleton still persisted.¹⁰³ While planning for the New Phoenix Repertory, he was willing to compromise his commitment to the New York season by shortening it, but he was not willing to abandon it. Although this dogged insistence upon remaining in New York seems overtly stubborn, there were a variety of reasons for it, and Hambleton was not alone in his stubbornness. In October 1972, the Theatre Incorporated Board reasserted its support of Hambleton's policy and enumerated its reasons for retaining the New York season:

1. The Phoenix' traditional funding would evaporate without it.
2. It was needed to attract the talent they wanted.
3. It would improve the potential for out-of-town bookings.
4. It was needed to interest television stations, which could provide more funds.
5. The Phoenix' goal had always been to present theatre of the highest quality that would meet the exacting standards of New York audiences.¹⁰⁴

The first and second points were interlocked. As was true for other institutional theatres such as Arena Stage, the Alley, and the Mark Taper, the traditional funding for the Phoenix was geographic. The angels that originally backed the Phoenix and then converted to become its patrons expected it to operate in New York as it always had. The only other options would be to move to another city or to tour exclusively. Moving to another city would mean starting over and trying to win support in a com-

munity that was either unaware of the needs of a resident theatre or was already supporting another nonprofit theatre. Touring exclusively would eliminate the appeal of New York exposure that the Phoenix had always used to lure accomplished artists.

The degree to which the New York season enhanced out-of-town bookings had been concealed during the APA-Phoenix years by the year-round operation. From 1965 through 1969 the schedule remained essentially the same, with little regard for whether playing in New York actually helped to create acceptance while touring. However, out of town productions for the New Phoenix Repertory had shown that, even though the regional market had grown, such staple items as A School for Wives were not financially viable on the road if they had not proven themselves by first playing in New York.¹⁰⁵ His original plan for the New Phoenix Repertory called for several out-of-town engagements prior to the New York season, but in practice he found this plan unfeasible. Pre-New York engagements were limited to Philadelphia and Boston, and all remaining road engagements were scheduled after the New York repertory.¹⁰⁶

The final two points are more dubious. The belief that playing in New York could provide revenue from television presentations seemed hopeful at best. No Phoenix production's had attracted interest from television stations since the 1950s.¹⁰⁷ Eventually, two more

Phoenix productions were telecast: Rules of the Game in 1975 and Uncommon Women and Others in 1979. Neither proved lucrative for the Phoenix. Finally, the board's assumption that the New York audience was more exacting than other audiences shows an obvious bias on the part of the board, but its bias does not necessarily render the belief invalid. Any institutional theatre choosing to operate in New York had to brave comparisons to Broadway's slick production standards. The critics, unwilling to assume a double standard, refused to review a resident company's season. Instead, they judged each production separately, regardless of the theatre's efforts to "stretch" actors as opposed to relying upon Broadway's narrow typecasting.¹⁰⁸

The Theatre Incorporated's list of reasons for staying in New York suggests that the Phoenix stayed in New York because it had no where else to go. Pulling up roots and moving to another city would mean abandoning the Phoenix' financial base and its audience. Furthermore, the board was comprised of people actively involved in New York's theatre. The 1957 board members had been producers and angels, and the composition of the board had not altered appreciably since that time.¹⁰⁹ Given this situation, it was clear that the Phoenix would remain a New York theatre and would continue to be judged by the standards of the commercial theatre.

The differences between commercial and institutional theatre were emphasized in 1974 at the First American Conference of Theatre (commonly referred to as FACT).¹¹⁰

Those attending the conference came from both the commercial and nonprofit theatre. Richard Barr sounded the theme for the conference when he said:

The main purpose of this gathering is to break down the dichotomy that exists between the non-profit professional and the Broadway theatre. . . . If we can make a continuing exchange between the non-profit professional theatre, Off Broadway and, in rare circumstances, Off Off Broadway, with Broadway, if we can make it simple for a talented playwright to be heard by subsidizing from either end, if we can begin to think of the American theatre as the American theatre and not just as Broadway or regional, profit or non-profit, if we can do this together in a sensible non-selfish, non-egotistical manner, we have the possibility of equalling Athens.¹¹¹

Barr's appeal is a restatement of the approach to production that T. Edward Hambleton had been practicing for ten years. Barr himself had been straddling the commercial and nonprofit worlds since making the Playwrights Unit a nonprofit corporation in December 1965.¹¹² Those at the conference who were most willing to explore options for transfers had already joined Hambleton in attempting to break down the barriers between nonprofit and commercial production. They included Gordon Davidson, Joseph Papp, and Zelda Fichandler.¹¹³ Davidson had transferred In the Matter of Robert J. Oppenheimer to Lincoln Center in 1969 and had collaborated with Hambleton on two projects: The Trial of the Catonsville Nine and Murderous Angels in

1970. Both of these productions were presented in New York by the Phoenix after having been mounted by the Center Theatre Group.¹¹⁴ Joseph Papp had moved Hair to Broadway in 1969 and had followed this with Two Gentlemen of Verona in 1971 and That Championship Season in 1972. Zelda Fichandler had also been active in transferring successful productions from Arena Stage in Washington, D.C. to Broadway. Her most successful venture had been Raisin, a musical based on A Raisin in the Sun, which had transferred to Broadway in October 1973.¹¹⁵

The first transfer to Broadway from Arena Stage had been The Great White Hope in 1968. This production created quite a stir when it arrived in New York, and several critics noted that it was the first production to arrive in New York from a regional theatre.¹¹⁶ Although The Great White Hope deserves the recognition it has received as a landmark in the maturation of the regional theatre movement, it was not the first nonprofit production to transfer to Broadway. It marked the beginning of a great surge of such transfers, but the history of nonprofit transfers to Broadway had begun over twenty years before. It started with two transfers from ANTA's Experimental Theatre, one of which (John Latouche and Jerome Moross's Ballet Ballads) was produced by T. Edward Hambleton.¹¹⁷

Hambleton's approach to transfers had remained consistent throughout his career as a producer. From its inception the Phoenix intended to exploit the potential of commercial transfers and made its first attempt to do so during its inaugural season with The Golden Apple. After playing its limited run at the Phoenix, it was moved to the Alvin Theatre where it ran another twelve weeks. The venture did not earn a profit and closed with a loss totalling \$117,000.¹¹⁸ After closing at the Alvin, the show moved to the Carter Barron Amphitheatre in Washington, D.C. where it grossed nearly \$68,000 in 9 performances.¹¹⁹ The following season a revue called Phoenix '55 also played at the Carter Barron Amphitheatre after completing an extended run at the Phoenix.

It wasn't until 1959 that the Phoenix again managed to transfer a production to a commercial run--this time with another musical, Once Upon a Mattress.¹²⁰ Two years later Hambleton moved Oh Dad, which had played for a record thirteen months at the Phoenix, to Broadway.¹²¹ As with The Golden Apple and Phoenix '55, the financial results with both of these shows were disappointing. However, his next transfer, the APA-Phoenix production of You Can't Take It With You in 1965, proved more successful. Although Oh Dad and Once Upon a Mattress had managed long runs, neither had done much more than keep the doors open. Of the two, Oh Dad was the more successful money maker,

but the proceeds from it were inadequate to underwrite the Anderson Theatre Project. The string of disappointing transfers changed with the APA-Phoenix production of You Can't Take It With You in 1965. By finding the funds to mount it for an extended run at the Lyceum, Hambleton solved two problems simultaneously. He created a basis for financing the following repertory season and proved to critics that a resident theatre could challenge Broadway's monopoly on polish.

You Can't Take It With You finally brought the financial pay off that Hambleton had been hoping for since 1953. Since the costumes and sets were already built, the expense of mounting the play was minimal, and the production grossed over \$670,000 in 239 performances.¹²² With this, Theatre Incorporated could pay off the company's debts from the 1964-65 season at 74th Street and from the 1965 season at Ann Arbor. It could also provide \$40,000 toward the next season at the Lyceum. The idea of using the proceeds of a successful production to finance an ongoing effort to mount less marketable choices had been around since the first days of the Theatre Guild,¹²³ and after years of frustration Hambleton had finally gotten the formula to work for him. He had found a way to get the APA-Phoenix into the Lyceum despite the Ford Foundation's wariness. In doing so he had also set a precedent that established a new market for production that would

prove fruitful for others. Looking back at the event, Martin Gottfried recognized the production's role in establishing a new market for nonprofit theatres. He observed:

[It] proved not only that Broadway ticket buyers would carry a revival a full season. It also proved that--to the Broadway community's naive astonishment--a resident company was actually capable of professional work. Not 'just' artistic work but hit work.¹²⁴

The Broadway community may have been astonished in 1965, but in the decades to come nonprofit theatres would continue to show themselves the equals of Broadway on Broadway's terms. Hambleton had shown the way, and others were to reap greater rewards than he had. Ten years later Joseph Papp brought A Chorus Line to Broadway, and the income from that production was adequate to finance the New York Shakespeare Festival for several seasons.¹²⁵ In 1979 the Manhattan Theatre Club, under the artistic leadership of Lynne Meadow, transferred Ain't Misbehavin' to Broadway and the move provided profits equal to the theatre's total income from the previous year.¹²⁶ Both of these productions also brought income to their parent institutions through a different path--the commercial tour. Just as with transfers to Broadway, this path was well-worn before Joseph Papp or Lynne Meadow ventured onto it. Once again the person who had blazed the trail was T. Edward Hambleton.

Hambleton had begun his efforts to use the road as an effective tool in 1958 with the formation of the National Phoenix. As the touring arm of the Phoenix, the National Phoenix was supposed to provide revenue and to spread the Phoenix name via national tours of productions that had proven successful at the Twelfth Street Theatre. Hambleton hired two young managers to oversee the daily operations of the National Phoenix, Michael Dewell, a recent graduate of England's Royal Academy of Dramatic Art, and Frances Anne Hersey, who had been working as an assistant to Hambleton and Houghton.¹²⁷

Although touring could provide welcome income, Hambleton was well aware that it could also lose money. To protect the Phoenix from financial risk, he established the National Phoenix as a limited partnership. Under the agreement, Theatre Incorporated would put up no money but would to receive the general partner's share, 50% of the profits. The agreement gave the National Phoenix sole touring rights to any Phoenix production, but it also allowed Theatre Incorporated the option to back out of the agreement with sixty days' notice.¹²⁸ The first play sent out under the National Phoenix banner was a reconstruction of the Phoenix' 1957 production of Mary Stuart as directed by Tyrone Guthrie. The tour was launched in the spring of 1959, and its cast included Signe Hasso in the title role

and Eva Le Gallienne as Elizabeth, the role she had played at the Phoenix.

The plan was not as lucrative as Hambleton had anticipated, and he attempted to bolster it a year later by adding a tour of Once Upon a Mattress.¹²⁹ Hambleton had hoped that the Phoenix would eventually have a permanent touring branch as well as a company in New York, but the formation of the Lincoln Center Repertory Company brought a halt to his efforts at the Twelfth Street Theatre and also spelled the end of the National Phoenix. All was not lost, though. After two years of touring, the National Phoenix had been invited by the Metropolitan Boston District Commission to organize and produce a festival of the performing arts at the Boston Arts Center during the summer of 1961. During this summer engagement Dewell and Hersey decided to form a permanent nonprofit repertory theatre that would tour nationally, and the National Phoenix became the National Repertory Theatre. With Eva Le Gallienne's encouragement and energy, this company managed to stay afloat for five seasons, playing on the commercial tour circuit and at universities. The National Repertory Theatre was not under Hambleton's control, but it had grown directly out of his efforts to establish a touring branch of the Phoenix. Although Hambleton's first venture into nonprofit touring spawned this separate theatre, it did not earn any profits for the

Phoenix. However, more lucrative results came seven years later when Hambleton resurrected nonprofit touring with the APA-Phoenix production of George Kelly's The Show Off.

In January 1968 John Houseman suggested that the APA-Phoenix might create substantial box office income by offering a tour of The Show Off with Helen Hayes.¹³⁰ Hambleton, seeing the validity of the suggestion, began planning the tour, but he did not follow the plan he had used for the National Phoenix. Instead of offering the tour under a limited partnership, the APA-Phoenix accepted the entire expense of the tour. Although this entailed some risk, the risk was minimal. The APA-Phoenix name was now well-established nationwide, and production costs would be negligible since the show was already a part of the repertory. The following fall the tour began in Boston with a strong pre-sale of tickets, and Hambleton thought an annual tour might be an effective means of creating revenue. Although the potential for such a plan evaporated when the APA and the Phoenix parted ways, the results from the Show Off tour suggest that Hambleton was right. It netted a \$240,000 profit.¹³¹

Transfers to commercial runs such as You Can't Take It With You and tours such as The Show Off have met with a good deal of critical complaint. Robert Brustein, the most vocal critic of such transfers, sees a danger for nonprofit theatres that develop productions with the hope

of cashing in on a later commercial run. This is certainly a valid concern, and Brustein has been consistent in voicing it.¹³² There is a danger that an institution might alter its focus in order to find another commercial hit. However, the production record of the APA-Phoenix shows no such alteration in programming. When the Phoenix and the APA joined forces in 1964 the repertoire offered an eclectic mixture of plays reminiscent of the choices of the early Phoenix. The repertoire included safe revivals such as Pirandello's Right You Are and Shaw's Man and Superman, productions of unproven appeal such as Gorki's The Lower Depths, and sure-fire offerings such as Cohan's The Tavern. During the next four seasons the selection of plays suggests no change toward safer choices. If anything, the fifteen new productions that entered the repertoire between 1964 and 1969, indicate that the company was becoming more adventurous.¹³³ Of these plays only five were clearly safe choices with obvious box office appeal: Ibsen's The Wild Duck (1965), Sheridan's The School for Scandal (1966), Molière's The Misanthrope (1968), The Show Off (1967), and Hamlet (1969). Also among the repertoire were two marginal choices that weren't guaranteed successes: Giraudoux's Judith (1965) and Beckett's Krapp's Last Tape (1966). The remaining eight selections were clearly gambles: Piscator's adaptation of War and Peace (1965),

MacLeish's Herakles (1965), Behan's The Hostage (1966), Whitman's We Comrades Three (1967), Ghelderode's Pantagleize (1967), Ionesco's Exit the King (1968), O'Casey's Cock-a-Doodle Dandy (1968), and Elliot's The Cocktail Party (1968).¹³⁴

This record of productions makes it clear that the 1965 run of You Can't Take It With You and the 1968 tour of The Show Off had no apparent affect on the play selections of the APA-Phoenix. Hambleton had used commercial transfers since 1954, and doing so had not altered his focus. Despite his efforts to put the commercial theatre to work for his purposes, he did not seek commercial vehicles.

Hambleton had fought for repertory in the heart of the commercial theatre for nineteen years. His battle began before the regional theatre movement had gathered momentum, and it continued through the tumultuous 1960s and early 1970s when other nonprofit theatres were announcing their abhorrence of New York. In toiling to find possible ways to finance his dream, Hambleton led other nonprofit managers to an understanding of how the commercial theatre could be exploited to support their ends. Through his efforts Hambleton showed that repertory in New York was unworkable on Broadway. Without further substantial concessions from unions and even more sumptuous subsidy, repertory on Broadway had proven economi-

cally unfeasible--whether in a large house such as the Lyceum or a small house such as the Playhouse. The two years that the APA-Phoenix had operated at the 74th Street Theatre offered ample evidence that repertory cannot function off-Broadway in a small house. Hambleton might have made repertory work off-Broadway in a large house such as the Twelfth Street Theatre, but the advent of the Lincoln Center Repertory Company torpedoed the effort before it had been given a chance to prove itself.

Throughout his career Hambleton had demonstrated a pragmatic ability to examine the situation that surrounded him and create a means of accomplishing his goals through the use of tools that were available. After nineteen years of working to establish repertory in New York he had come up empty-handed. Once again it was time to reassess where the Phoenix had come and where it still might go. Perhaps the Phoenix was not meant to be the main event in this circus called New York theatre. If this was the case, perhaps the Phoenix should fall back on one of its oldest traditions and become a Sideshow.

CHAPTER 6

THE NEW PLAY MARKET

When Hambleton finally accepted the defeat of repertory in 1975, the influence and prestige of the Phoenix had dwindled. Seven years earlier the APA-Phoenix had demanded attention at the mid-town Lyceum, but in subsequent years the Phoenix had gradually retrenched to shorter seasons with smaller companies in smaller houses, always further from the hubbub of Broadway. The Phoenix was again threatened with extinction,¹ and Hambleton, perhaps finally becoming a realist at sixty-two, was unwillingly to lead yet another charge into the midst of the fray. If the Phoenix was to continue, he would be content to have it fill a small niche. Though he would no longer take the large gambles he had in the past, his final years as a manager, in which he returned to off-Broadway, reflected the strategies he had cultivated since 1953.

During Hambleton's long effort to bring repertory to New York, the off-Broadway theatre had changed drastically. When he had moved from the Twelfth Street Theatre to the 74th Street theatre in 1961 and proclaimed that he would concentrate on new plays, few theatres were developing new work. The majority of off-Broadway houses had been mounting revivals and striving to attain the level of production that the Phoenix had set as a standard eight years earlier. In the ensuing fifteen years several theatres had successfully pursued revivals. Most prominent among them were Gene Feist's Roundabout Theatre, which had grown steadily since its founding in 1965, and Christopher Martin's Classic Stage Company (now the CSC), which had just gained off-Broadway status in the 1975-76 season after having operated off off-Broadway for nine years. After Hambleton had left off-Broadway in 1965, it had become fully professional, and the strong offerings from its theatres eliminated the need for yet another company offering revivals.

By the 1975-76 season, revivals had become the new norm in New York. For the third year in a row, revivals outnumbered new plays on Broadway.² The production of new plays had held steady through the mid-sixties, but had suddenly dropped at the start of the seventies while the number of revivals continued to rise.³ Circle in the Square, after almost closing in 1973, had re-emerged on

Broadway in its new home and had offered announced seasons of revivals in 1974-75 and 1975-76. Joining the revival movement rather late, Joseph Papp abandoned his crusade to reform Lincoln Center's Vivian Beaumont Theatre into a showcase for new plays and offered three revivals in 1975.

The trend toward revivals was mirrored off-Broadway. From a high of fifty-five in 1968-69, new play production had dropped steadily until it fell below the number of revivals in 1975-76.⁴ Hambleton had been working to establish the viability of revivals since opening the Phoenix, and it was apparent that New York now accepted revivals. Revivals in repertory, however, had proven too costly, even in the smaller Playhouse Theatre.

The marked decline in new plays suggested to some critics and producers that experimentation was no longer possible off-Broadway. Otis L. Guernsey, Jr. noted in Best Plays of 1973-74 that the cost of production off-Broadway had rocketed upward since the late 1960s. In 1968 it had cost only \$10,000 to produce the nine-character play, The Boys in the Band, but in 1973 it had cost \$70,000 to mount the three-character play, A Breeze from the Gulf. Guernsey stressed the obvious result of such costs: fewer and more conservative productions.⁵ During the first months of 1975 two articles appeared that further stressed the decline of off-Broadway. In January, Mel Gussow wrote:

Today, Off Broadway has shrunk. Its influence is negligible, and its outstanding talents have gone elsewhere. It has become a little Broadway, a place to present a play when a producer cannot quite raise the backing necessary for Broadway. As recently as 1967 the League of Off Broadway Theatres and Producers listed 36 member theatres and 74 member producers. Now membership has declined to 12 theatres and 38 individuals, and the group is largely inactive. In that same seven-year period, the number of productions has dropped from 64 to 55. There were fewer plays and the individual runs were shorter.⁶

Two weeks later Walter Kerr joined Gussow and Guernsey in dismissing off-Broadway as a venue for experimentation. Kerr wrote that now off off-Broadway was "saving the American theatre's neck," just as off-Broadway had twenty years before.⁷ Kerr's description of off off-Broadway was reminiscent of the accounts of off-Broadway activity in the early 1950s. He noted that there were perhaps 100 off off-Broadway houses and that all but a dozen of these were "one-shot deals." Kerr felt that the future of the New York theatre was being shaped by the managers of the institutional off off-Broadway theatres. That spring Joseph Papp announced that off-Broadway was dead. He said, "There is no Off Broadway as a movement. . . . A play still has to be a hit (like A Chorus Line) to have people come. If the work gets bad notices, you take it off the boards and the play is dead--and the playwright is dead."⁸ He then announced that he would mount new productions at the Booth theatre on Broadway and change the status of the Public Theatre to off off-Broadway.

Papp's claim that off-Broadway shows had to be hits reflects the prevalent attitude toward off-Broadway in the mid 1970s: it had fallen victim to the economics that ruled Broadway and its producers could no longer risk experimentation. Unlike Papp, Hambleton did not accept this assessment. He could not afford to run the Phoenix on Broadway, but he refused to retrench to off off-Broadway status. After assessing the situation, he decided to mount a season of new plays that had received staged readings or productions by regional theatres but had not yet been seen in New York. Calling this new scheme the "second step" program, Hambleton mounted five new plays during the 1976-77 season: Kevin O. Morrison's Ladyhouse Blues, Joanna M. Glass's Canadian Gothic/American Modern, Jonathan Levy's Marco Polo, Peter Handke's A Sorrow Beyond Dreams, David Berry's G.R. Point, and Barrie Keefe's Scribes. To reduce cost he moved the Phoenix to the Marymount Manhattan Theatre at 221 East Seventy-First Street.⁹

Hambleton once again seemed to be lunging in a different direction and hauling the Phoenix with him. His approach to the new play market reflects a management style he had shown before. It seems to have always been important to Hambleton to produce continuously, even when a definitive plan was not mapped out. He had kept the

Phoenix producing every season since 1953, even if at times he seemed to be grasping at straws.

Daniel Freudenberger, who was appointed Artistic Director of the Phoenix in 1976, feels that Hambleton was grasping at straws with the "second step" program. When asked about the program, Freudenberger dismissed it as an ill-conceived stopgap ploy devised to attract grants.¹⁰ Freudenberger's claim seems credible: the term "second step" appears only in Hambleton's applications to NYSCA and NEA.¹¹ In its hasty creation and its short duration, the "second step" program resembles Hambleton's flirtation with education programs in 1970 and his decision to mount new plays at the 74th Street Theatre in 1961. As in 1961 and in 1970, Hambleton's Phoenix was in transition, not yet sure of its new focus. As for the "second step" plan, Freudenberger noted that it proved unworkable because to adopt it would turn the Phoenix into a booking house for regional workshop productions.¹²

Even if the "second step" program was not the solution, Hambleton had determined that the Phoenix would now focus only on new plays, and this was a major change for the Phoenix.¹³ Previously the Phoenix had been an actors' theatre, but it now would be a playwrights' theatre. When Hambleton and Houghton had founded the Phoenix in 1953, they wanted to offer challenging roles to experienced actors; and from 1957 to 1976, through its efforts to

establish a permanent company, the Phoenix had continued to focus on acting. This concentration upon acting had played into one of Hambleton's strengths as a producer. He knew the acting pool well, and the Phoenix had gained a reputation for working with the best actors in the American theatre.¹⁴ When the Phoenix converted to a playwrights' theatre, Hambleton sought help in the selection of writers by hiring Anne Cattaneo, a recent graduate of Yale School of Drama's dramaturgy program, as the Phoenix' literary manager in 1977. Cattaneo became an important part of the Phoenix, developing an extensive commissioning program, and attracting new American and prominent international playwrights.

Hambleton's interest in new plays had been piqued by recent developments off off-Broadway. Just as in 1953 when other off-Broadway activity had preceded the Phoenix' appearance, in 1976 other theatres had been specializing in new plays. Walter Kerr noted that the Phoenix had entered the new play market after considerable efforts had already been made by Playwrights Horizons and Manhattan Theatre Club (hereafter MTC).¹⁵ Kerr's comments suggested that if Hambleton wanted to mount new plays off-Broadway, critics would compare his work to these theatres even though neither operated with an off-Broadway contract. Hambleton felt that he could make Phoenix offerings dis-

tinctive by providing full productions instead of the workshops.

Playwrights Horizons had been founded in 1971 by Robert Moss, who had been the stage manager for the APA-Phoenix' production of War and Peace in 1967. In its first five seasons, Playwrights Horizons mounted workshop productions on no budget, averaging roughly twenty-five productions each season.¹⁶ Thereafter, under the guidance of André Bishop, it began to offer more fully developed productions of fewer scripts. By 1983 Bishop could claim that Playwrights Horizons had grown away from the idea of doing countless workshop productions by an assortment of writers. He said, "That was exciting, but you outgrow that. I felt we had to get heavily into providing productions of excellence, which means limiting the amount of plays you do and concentrating on design and direction."¹⁷

Lynn Meadow, who had become artistic director of MTC in 1972, shared Bishop's interest in more fully realized production. Like Playwrights Horizons, MTC had been mounting dozens of workshop productions each season, but under Meadow's direction the number of productions shrank as design and directing gained more attention. Both these theatres had been operating under Equity's Showcase Code, which limited their efforts to improve production standards. Under the Showcase Code, theatres could use union actors without paying them but could give only

twelve performances of a given play in four weeks and could charge only \$2.50 for admission.¹⁸ When Hambleton began production of new plays in 1976, both Playwrights Horizons and MTC were operating under the Showcase Code, but both soon moved up to off-Broadway status with Equity, MTC in 1978 and Playwrights Horizon's in 1981.

Hambleton's previous foray into new play production had been a mere diversion. His experiment at the 74th Street Theatre had ended after just a few years and had been augmented by several revivals.¹⁹ Although his "second step" program in 1976 suggested a lack of clear direction, this time Hambleton remained focused on new plays and used production strategies that had served him well previously. Always catholic in taste, Hambleton was not interested in limiting the Phoenix to a few "in house" writers. The choice of plays followed the pattern of selection that had been used for the Sideshow series that Hambleton had reinstalled during the three seasons of the New Phoenix Repertory (1972-4). These Sideshows had provided workshop productions for a variety of playwrights: international playwrights unknown in the United States; regional playwrights not yet seen in New York; and new playwrights with few or no production credits.²⁰

Although Playwrights Horizons, MTC, and the Phoenix were all producing developing works, Phoenix productions

were distinctive. Hambleton entered the new play market in 1976 hoping to use the reputation of the Phoenix to help playwrights gain exposure to a larger audience. Although Playwrights Horizons and MTC were gaining reputations for the work they were doing, neither could boast a twenty-five-year history of continuous production. Off off-Broadway had been accepted as a professional venue, so plays at either of these houses were reviewed by critics. But Hambleton believed that Phoenix productions provided a sense of stature not apparent at the other two theatres.

Hambleton had intended for the Phoenix to have recognizable impact as a developmental theatre. He felt that the long history of the Phoenix could be used as an asset for the plays it presented and could bring more attention to playwrights than other theatres could provide. In support of a 1978-79 grant application to NEA, Hambleton wrote a letter in which he presented his case. He argued that the history of artistic quality of Phoenix productions allowed it to attract the actors and directors who would provide the best possible New York production for each play and that the Phoenix would attract a more mainstream audience than off off-Broadway theatres. Hambleton went on to provide evidence of the impact provided by the Phoenix, writing, "The Phoenix can present new work at its best to this audience and thus create a creditable reputation for play and playwright. One example of this

exposure is Uncommon Women and Others by Wendy Wasserstein. This play has been chosen for the public television Theatre in America series."²¹

Uncommon Women and Others had received a reading at Playwrights Horizons in March 1977, and the Phoenix produced it the following November. Wasserstein remembers that the Phoenix production gave her a "feeling of legitimacy," and she offered the following observation that helps to characterize the difference between the Phoenix and Playwrights Horizons at that time: "André Bishop said that he wanted to make Playwrights Horizons into a theatre where a playwright would decide to go to Playwrights Horizons like I had decided to go to the Phoenix--that he could offer a playwright that kind of legitimacy."²²

Bishop soon made Playwrights Horizons just such a theatre, and in 1984 he provided even more exposure for Wasserstein's Isn't It Romantic than the Phoenix had in its premiere production in 1981. Bishop did what Hambleton had not been able to do: after mounting the play, he transferred it to another theatre for an extended run. Under Hambleton the play had received thirty-seven performances, but Bishop transferred the Playwrights Horizons production to the Lucille Lortel Theatre where the play ran for two years, totalling 615 performances.²³ Ironically, Playwrights Horizons soon became more adept than

the Phoenix at transferring productions to Broadway and other off-Broadway theatres for extended runs. Hambleton, who had pioneered the nonprofit-to-commercial transfer decades earlier, no longer pursued transfers with the energy so characteristic of his earlier efforts.

Hambleton's lack of initiative in transferring successful plays became an issue during the final years of the Phoenix. Cattaneo claimed during an interview that the theatres which prospered during the period were the ones that learned to transfer productions quickly, and that both Playwrights Horizons and MTC did so.²⁴ In contrast, in its last six years, the Phoenix funded no transfers at all. Since Hambleton was unwilling to risk the money and effort that a transfer required, each play that did transfer was handled by an outside producer, and the changeover to a new producer took time. During the last six years of the Phoenix, two productions other than Isn't It Romantic were transferred: Marsha Norman's Getting Out (1977) and Christopher Durang's Beyond Therapy (1981). Of the three transfers, Getting Out moved the fastest, opening at the Lucille Lortel Theatre on 15 May 1979, seven months after it closed at the Phoenix. For Beyond Therapy the process took fifteen months, 25 January 1981 to 26 May 1982. Isn't It Romantic closed at the Phoenix on 28 June 1981 and did not reopen until Playwrights Horizons mounted

it with a 15 December 1983 opening, a total down time of eighteen months.

The speed at which a transfer took place was important because timing and publicity were critical. Since critics were reluctant to re-review a play, the move needed to be made immediately at the end of the run of the play so as to retain its audience.²⁵ Hambleton's slowness in arranging transfers was troublesome to his playwrights, and his refusal to take on the transfers himself put artistic choices at risk. Although it was not transferred, Uncommon Women and Others had attracted the attention of a Broadway producer, but the producer wanted to change the ending of the play. Later, when Claire Nichtern, a prominent producer in the mid-1970s, mounted Beyond Therapy on Broadway, she vetoed Durang's preference for director, Jerry Zaks, replacing him with John Madden.²⁶ In contrast, Bishop's transfer of Isn't It Romantic went quite smoothly because Playwrights Horizons retained artistic control throughout the run of the play.²⁷ Hambleton's refusal to sponsor the transfer of plays that he otherwise supported troubled both Wasserstein and Durang.²⁸

The problem created by slow transfers was especially troublesome at the Phoenix because its performance schedule was limited. The Phoenix shared its theatre with the Marymount Manhattan College theatre program, and Ham-

bleton could not not alter his schedule to extend any of his plays.²⁹ The longest run while the Phoenix was at Marymount was 41 performances of Getting Out, and most runs were under 30 performances. Since the house seated 299, this meant that, even at capacity, under one thousand people were seeing each production. The name of the Phoenix might attract attention for the playwrights, but their plays were being seen by a small audience, a bothersome limitation for a playwrights' theatre.

Hambleton's inaction in dealing with this problem is particularly curious in light of the energy he expended in finding producible material. The competition for strong scripts had been apparent at the Eugene O'Neill Memorial Theatre. This theatre, founded in Waterford, Connecticut in 1965 as a playwrights' showcase, offered a summer season of readings that provided playwrights with the support of professional actors, directors, and dramaturgs. Each play was presented for only one or two performances, but it played to a select audience of professional writers, directors, and producers, thus offering valuable exposure for the playwright. In the 1976-77 and 1977-78 seasons, five of the ten plays mounted by the Phoenix had first been seen at the O'Neill Center by Hambleton or Daniel Freudenberg.³⁰ This was obviously a rich resource of new material, but it also created difficulties. Playwrights were sometimes besieged with

offers from producers in a pricing war for options. In Best Plays of 1973-74, Israel Horowitz stated that two of his plays that had been presented at the O'Neill had resulted in options being offered to him within minutes of the final curtain.³¹ In 1977, the Phoenix, one of the theatres in regularly attendance at the O'Neill Center, procured the option for Uncommon Women and Others by simply outbidding Playwrights Horizons after a performance.³²

Despite the coup of wresting this play from a competitor and the Phoenix' prominence as a developmental theatre, the process of landing producible scripts continued to be a problem. Outbidding one's opponents might work upon occasion, but it was hardly a sound business strategy for a nonprofit theatre, and the use of such a tactic diminished the spirit of cooperation that had grown amongst the developmental theatres.³³ Anne Cattaneo suggested to Hambleton that commissioning plays might be a way to address this issue, and this suggestion resulted in the Playwrights' Commissioning Program.³⁴

This program, like Hambleton's earlier Anderson Theatre Project, was short-lived and has been generally overlooked by historians despite its scope and boldness. It also resembles the Anderson Theatre Project in that it developed as an answer to practical concerns. In 1963 Hambleton had launched the Anderson Theatre Project in

order to retain a permanent company; fifteen years later he instituted the Playwrights' Commissioning Program to provide a new source for producible scripts. Speaking with Mel Gussow about the decision to commission new work, Hambleton said, "When we decided we wanted to do new plays, . . . we found ourselves in competition with Joe Papp at the Public Theater and Lynne Meadow at the Manhattan Theater Club. It became clear that it would be difficult to get a new play without picking it up further back, when the idea started. That's how we came up with the idea to commission our new plays."³⁵

In October 1978, Hambleton and Freudenberger reported on the plan to the board of Theatre Incorporated. Having procured grants from NEA's Literary Manager Program and from the Rockefeller Foundation, they proposed to pay each commissioned playwright \$1500 for the completion of a script. Hambleton stated that they should expect under fifty percent of the commissions to yield producible material and proposed that the Phoenix offer ten commissions yearly. Freudenberger emphasized that the Phoenix would endeavor to develop each commissioned play beyond mere readings and workshops and that the goal for each commission would be a full production on the main stage.³⁶

Hambleton's insistence upon approaching a large number of playwrights was consistent with the way he had always managed the Phoenix. In the first season of the program,

although the Phoenix did not commission ten playwrights as Hambleton had proposed, it did commission six, considerably fewer than Hambleton had requested, but still a sizable program. The Phoenix did not start off with a small pilot program of one or two commissions to test the potential of the project. No "house writer" would develop along with the theatre in the way that Lanford Wilson developed with the Circle Repertory Theatre. Instead the Phoenix would offer six commissions and its door would be open to a variety of playwrights: writers would come and go as actors had during the earliest years of the Phoenix. The magnitude of the program reflected Hambleton's belief that there was an inherent value in producing a quantity of work, and he had stated this belief years earlier. In 1964 he wrote:

I believe that one of the requisites of creativity is volume. That this had as much to do with the development of writers in the 20s, 30s, and 40s despite the Twin Beds, Up In Mabel's Rooms and Abie's Irish Roses that helped to swell it. Certainly creativity is not helped by the incredible difficulties of the young playwright in finding protection. There must be means of the play getting on stage without the producer losing his shirt.³⁷

In 1979, the Phoenix Playwrights' Commissioning Program addressed the concerns Hambleton had expressed fifteen years earlier; and in managing the program, Hambleton relied on production strategies that the Phoenix had used since its earliest years. At the Phoenix, artists had never earned handsome salaries by commercial standards,

but they had always earned a good deal more than those working at other alternative theatres. Now that Phoenix was offering commissions, it was following the same pattern. Fifteen hundred dollars was not enough to give a playwright six months off in which to concentrate upon a new script, but it was more than any other developmental theatre was offering.³⁸ The agreement between the playwright and the Phoenix stipulated that the playwright was to receive payment in three installments: \$500 upon signing the agreement, \$500 upon delivery of the first draft, \$500 upon delivery of the second draft.³⁹

From first season in 1953, the Phoenix had offered full productions that were beyond the means of other off-Broadway houses and created a large volume of work, employing a far larger number of artists than any other off-Broadway theatre. The Commissioning Program reflected both of these early strategies. It encouraged a large volume of work by offering commissions to several playwrights each year, and the Phoenix intended to mount its commissioned plays as full productions, not as staged readings or sparsely mounted workshops. This commitment to a full production was particularly remarkable because the production of a commissioned script was considered highly speculative.⁴⁰ Despite this risk, the Phoenix' resolve to pursue full production was stated clearly in 1978, and its commitment to seeing scripts through to

main-stage productions is corroborated by the people involved with the program.⁴¹

The most consistent source of funds for playwriting prior to the Phoenix' Playwrights Commissioning Program had been the Rockefeller Foundation, which had offered grants to playwrights as early as 1939, when it awarded \$1,000 each to six playwrights to help them finish works had they had already begun.⁴² In 1966 the Foundation gave the Richard Barr, Edward Albee, and Clinton Wilder's Playwrights' Unit a grant totalling nearly \$200,000, and the following year it offered substantial support to the Eugene O'Neill Memorial Theatre, which was then in its third year.⁴³ These grants, though not commissions, demonstrated the Rockefeller Foundation's allegiance to new work, and in 1972 the foundation began an extensive commissioning program.⁴⁴ Through this program, eight playwrights were each to receive \$8,500 and a \$500 relocation allowance. These were playwright-in-residence grants that were awarded jointly to the playwright and to a theatre, which received \$1,000 to help cover the cost of readings or workshop productions mounted to aid the development of the new play.⁴⁵ Playwrights were awarded the grants by a panel of nonprofit managers and writers appointed by Howard Klein, the director of the arts program for the Rockefeller Foundation. The panel

examined applications provided by theatres which had nominated playwrights for consideration.⁴⁶

Though the \$1,500 that Hambleton's Playwrights' Commission Program offered was far less than the stipend that Rockefeller Foundation provided, the Phoenix plan offered a distinct advantage over the Rockefeller plan: the choice of playwrights was controlled in-house. The Phoenix chose those playwrights that Cattaneo felt she could work with and did not have to wait for a disinterested panel appointed by an outside agency to find out if the commission would receive funding.

The plan for the Playwrights' Commissioning Program was carefully devised to strike a balance between the interests of the theatre and those of the playwright. The process was designed as a series of steps which served two purposes that reflect this balance: it enhanced the potential to create a script that would interest the Phoenix, but it also provided several occasions at which the writer could back out of the agreement. The plan called for the playwright to meet with Anne Cattaneo several times before the commission would be offered. After the playwright and Cattaneo were satisfied that an idea had been reached that was viable for both the playwright and the Phoenix, a contract would be drawn up and a date set for delivery of the first draft. The playwright would then proceed to write, meeting with Cattaneo regularly to discuss progress and

problems. Within a month of the first draft being delivered, the two would determine a deadline for the second draft.⁴⁷ When the play had taken an identifiable form, Cattaneo and the playwright would choose a director, and informal readings would be arranged when it was agreed that the script was ready for them. The second draft of the script would be given a staged reading and a more formal critique. Upon delivery of the second draft, the Phoenix would hold exclusive rights to production; however, if the Phoenix announced that it would not produce the play, the theatre's rights to the script were nullified and the playwright was free to offer the play to other producers.

In 1979, the first year of the program, the Phoenix commissioned plays from six playwrights: Christopher Durang, Wendy Wasserstein, Romulus Linney, Michael McClure, Stephen Poliakoff, and Lonne Elder III. Verifying Hambleton's prediction that half of the commissions would be successful, three of the six resulted in full productions by the Phoenix. All three of these--Isn't It Romantic by Wasserstein, Beyond Therapy by Durang, and The Captivity of Pixie Shedman by Linney--were produced on the main stage of the Phoenix two seasons later. The first two proved highly popular for the Phoenix, and both moved on to commercial settings.⁴⁸ The Captivity of Pixie Shed-

man did not fare well in its production at the Phoenix, but it has received subsequent regional productions.⁴⁹

It had taken two years for the process to move from commission to main-stage production, and the Phoenix' commitment to commissions has been followed by other theatres. In 1981, Playwrights Horizons instituted a commissioning program that offered nine commissions a year. This program differed from that of the Phoenix in that it offered more money (\$5,000), and it was not designed as series of steps. Instead, writers were given the entire amount at the time of the commission, and there was no attempt, as there had been with the Phoenix program, to work in conjunction with the playwright in order to assure the theatre's interest in the script.⁵⁰

Results from subsequent commissioning programs suggest that the Phoenix original success rate of fifty per cent was high. For example, South Coast Repertory began a large commissioning program in 1985, and, according to John Glore, the literary manager for the theatre, its structure is very close to that practiced by the Phoenix in 1979.⁵¹ South Coast Repertory commissions four to six scripts per year with a contract that offers half of the stipend upon signing the contract, one quarter upon submission of the first draft, and the final quarter if the theatre decides to develop the play further. Like the

Phoenix before it, South Coast Repertory commissions its plays with the assumption that it will eventually produce them on the main stage. When interviewed, Glore asserted that the theatre produces one quarter of the plays it commissions, and he considers this a high rate of success.⁵²

MTC has also commissioned plays, and Kate Leowald, the director of play development for MTC, oversees two commissioning programs, one for emerging playwrights and another for experienced playwrights.⁵³ The former program provides a commission and a one-year residency for a young playwright, and the latter program provides a commission and an in-house reading of a draft. As with the Phoenix' Playwrights' Commissioning Program, the MTC can choose to option the play after receiving the draft. When interviewed, Leowald stated that if MTC does not option a play, it circulates the play to other theatres to stimulate interest. Of the eleven commissions that MTC has issued the during past three seasons, five are still outstanding, five were not optioned, and one is planned for a second-stage production next season. None have been optioned for the main stage.⁵⁴

Unfortunately, because of personnel changes and financial insolvency, the Phoenix failed to repeat the success it had with its first round of commissions. Daniel Freudenberger's appointment as artistic director in 1976 had not been well-received by NYSCA, which doubted

Freudenberger's ability to lead the Phoenix,⁵⁵ and in June 1980 Steven Robman replaced Freudenberger. Robman, a graduate of Yale School of Drama, had directed at several regional theatres and had directed Uncommon Women and Others and Says I, Says He for the Phoenix. As the new artistic director, he was not interested in following through on someone else's vision, and, even though his first season saw the production of the three commissioned plays, it was clear that he wanted to define the direction of the Phoenix in his own terms.⁵⁶ Anne Cattaneo, sensing Robman's desire to alter the program, left the Phoenix at the end of the 1980-81 season to become the dramaturg for the Acting Company.⁵⁷ Although the commissioning program continued until the demise of the Phoenix in 1982, it was never given the prominence under Robman that it enjoyed during its first two years.

Beyond these changes in personnel, financial problems were worsening again. Grants had dwindled appreciably in the late 1970s, and the Phoenix' staff was convinced that other theatres with similar programs were getting more money from NYSCA and NEA than the Phoenix.⁵⁸ Hambleton struggled against two assumptions made by these agencies: (1) that there was no need to give money to the Phoenix because Hambleton would make up any losses accrued by the Phoenix; (2) that there was no real continuity in the Phoenix program aside from Hambleton's presence.

Unfortunately, the Phoenix' track record did much to support both assumptions. Hambleton had bailed out the Phoenix several times during his tenure as its manager, and he was the only person who had been associated with the Phoenix throughout its history. His support of the Phoenix, essential in its formative years, was now a liability.

The impracticality of his contributions to the Phoenix had not been lost on Hambleton, and in 1975 he had notified the board of Theatre Incorporated that the policy had tarnished their appeal to foundations.⁵⁹ However, Hambleton's donations had been established in the 1950s when alternative funding simply did not exist, and when funding did become available Hambleton's contributions became conspicuous on the financial statements that the Phoenix provided in support of its grant applications.⁶⁰ State and federal support had been cut back during the 1975-76 season when the Phoenix moved to the smaller quarters of the Playhouse, had dropped even further during the 1976-77 season when the Phoenix had shifted to the production of new plays, and had never improved to the level of funding the Phoenix had enjoyed in the early 1970s.⁶¹

The second assumption, that continuity at the Phoenix was limited to Hambleton's presence as supervisor, was particularly troublesome.⁶² The theatres to which the

Phoenix was most comparable, Playwrights Horizons and MTC, had been recently sculpted by their artistic directors. Meadow and Bishop were strong-willed, articulate, and young; and their theatres reflected their energy. In contrast, the Phoenix had been molded into a variety of shapes over a period of decades by its managing director. Though Hambleton was clearly strong-willed, he had never been articulate, and was certainly not young.

After the Phoenix had moved to the Marymount Theatre, Hambleton's involvement in day-to-day activities had decreased. When interviewed, Wendy Wasserstein referred to him as a "beneficent presence" who reminded her of her father. Christopher Durang remembered him as a "grand-fatherly figure," and Ann Cattaneo stated that she consulted with him weekly but that day-to-day decisions were left to Freudenberger and her.⁶³ The playwrights remember that Hambleton attended readings and occasional run-throughs but made no comments on the proceedings. As manager of the APA-Phoenix in the 1960s, Hambleton was a whirlwind of activity in comparison, even wanting to know about daily decisions when the company was in California and he was in New York.⁶⁴

The Phoenix lacked a clear path to follow after Hambleton's departure. The high points of the Phoenix' history had come when Hambleton was able to collaborate with strong directors: Houseman, Guthrie, Vaughan, Rabb,

Prince, and Porter. Between 1976 and 1982 the tradition of strong direction and renewal was no longer evident. Freudenberger's appointment as artistic director in 1976 did nothing to help define a course of action. Having worked only with the Phoenix, he was unknown to the public and to NYSCA and NEA. The appointment of Cattaneo as literary manager improved the situation. Her degree from Yale School of Drama was a respectable credential, especially in light of the recent progress made by other Yale graduates such as Lynn Meadow and Robert Kalfin. Furthermore, the Phoenix' program was demonstrably stronger after her arrival.⁶⁵ Had Hambleton replaced Freudenberger with a dynamic artistic director who could work in conjunction with Cattaneo and build on the foundation she was laying, the Phoenix might have prospered in the 1980s. Steven Robman, however, was not such a director. He had directed at several regional theatres, but he had never before attempted to run a theatre, and he brought no visible agenda or stylistic focus with him. Cattaneo's departure during his first season did not bode well for the Phoenix' future.

Without Cattaneo, the Playwrights Commissioning Program dwindled, and the Phoenix once again seemed to be adrift without apparent purpose. Hambleton had intended to retire after the 1982-83 season that was supposed to celebrate the thirtieth anniversary of the Phoenix, but

produce one new play and to mount a retrospective of past Phoenix hits, but the rights to Harvey and The Show Off were unavailable and estimated costs for Once Upon a Mattress were prohibitive.⁶⁶ After a weakly-attended production of Two Fish in the Sky by English playwright Michael Hastings, the Phoenix announced that it would terminate operation on 8 December 1982. Michael Feingold's post-mortem in the Village Voice offered the following assessment:

Robman had never actually run a theater, and the hit-or-miss process of discovering his vision was a tragic mismatch with an institution that had already been too many different things to different people. The well of private funding that had supported the theatre for so long was drying up--nobody backs a dying horse--and the years of constant upheaval had kept the Phoenix from developing a staff that knew how to court corporate and foundation donors.⁶⁷

Feingold was right in claiming that the situation was precarious for Robman and for the Phoenix. Robman was attempting to take over the reins from Hambleton while the Phoenix was once again facing transition. Funds had become increasingly difficult to procure, and Hambleton no longer had the will to forge ahead.

Hambleton's decision to develop new plays from 1976 to 1982 may seem to be yet another misdirected ploy contrived merely to keep the theatre's doors open; however, the strategies that guided the Phoenix through its last years were the same ones that Hambleton had used throughout his career. Until its final season, the Phoenix continued to

explore new markets of production that other theatres would later accept, and it continued to throw its full force into projects despite their speculative nature. In 1976, refusing to accept the prevalent assumption that off-Broadway was dead, Hambleton set out to reaffirm that off-Broadway was a credible venue for the development of new work, and Playwrights Horizons and MTC have proven that he was right. In 1978, he created a commissioning program designed to provide an ongoing supply of producible new scripts. The Playwrights' Commissioning Program never achieved the steady flow of productions that Hambleton had envisioned, but MTC and several regional theatres now offer commissions each season.

CHAPTER 7

CONCLUSION

In an essay entitled, "From Impresario to Arts Administrator: Formal Accountability in Nonprofit Cultural Organizations," Richard A. Peterson describes the duties of the theatrical producer and examines the way in which these duties changed during the 1960s and 1970s, noting that the managers of the new nonprofit art institutions were quite different from the impresarios of previous decades. Peterson writes, "Whereas the impresario relied on personal ties and charm in an entrepreneurial environment," Peterson writes, "the arts administrator relies on the norms of formal accounting in an environment of numerous bureaucratically structured organizations and unstructured publics."¹ Perhaps more than any other producer, T. Edward Hambleton bridged the gap between impresario and administrator. His career spanned an era of volatile change. He began producing plays on Broadway

in 1937, joining the independent impresarios who offered the public plays that were intended to reap profits and to run as long as possible. When he retired forty-five years later, the state of the theatre had changed drastically. Broadway's impresarios still offered the public hits, but institutional, nonprofit theatres such as the Public Theatre, Manhattan Theatre Club, and Playwrights Horizons had joined the Phoenix Theatre in its challenge of Broadway's hegemony.

To assess the impact of a single producer during a period of such remarkable change is a difficult task, and it is tempting to overstate the significance of single events in an effort to explain how such change has occurred. For example, Circle in the Square's Summer and Smoke (1952) and Arena Stage's The Great White Hope (1968) have been recognized as landmark productions: the former being widely acclaimed as the "beginning" of off-Broadway, the latter as the "beginning" of nonprofit-to-profit transfers.² Although these productions deserve recognition, neither realistically marks a "beginning" of a trend. Instead, both are part of a continuum of progress from the Broadway-dominated theatre of the late 1940s to the varied offerings available today. As the general manager of the Phoenix Theatre, Hambleton was an influential part of this continuum, and he consciously used his theatre as a catalyst for change through three decades.

In founding the Phoenix, Hambleton and Norris Houghton intended to create a theatre that would be an alternative to Broadway, not a stepping-stone to it. When they started in 1953, a theatre's box office was the only means of income, and public support of institutional theatre would not appear for more than a decade. Consequently, while establishing the Phoenix, Hambleton and Houghton faced more daunting challenges than did the managers of the institutional theatres that followed them, and in addressing these challenges, they introduced New York to a variety of innovations that have since become commonplace. During its first year, for example, the Phoenix announced that it would present a season of plays instead of single, long-run productions, and for the next ten years the Phoenix was the only theatre in New York that did not rely upon long runs. Also during its first season, the Phoenix began to woo students to its productions through special ticket promotions, and Hambleton's interest in student audiences is further evinced in the 1958 Theatre-at-the-Schools program, a pioneering project that placed professional actors in the public schools in productions and workshops much like those used later by Joseph Papp. Beginning with its fifth season (1957-58), the Phoenix operated as a nonprofit corporation and continued as the only nonprofit theatre in the city for another four years.

Such strategies used by Hambleton and Houghton at the Phoenix Theatre were significant factors in the transformation of off-Broadway from a venue for quasi-professional showcases to a viable alternative to Broadway. Unlike other off-Broadway theatres of the early 1950s, the Phoenix was not interested in operating as a minor league franchise that merely developed its artists to see them eventually promoted to Broadway. Whereas other off-Broadway producers accepted such enfranchisement, Hambleton and Houghton rejected it, and in doing so they altered the purpose and methods of producing plays off-Broadway. Furthermore, they paid their artists a living, if less-than-commercial, wage; they provided challenging roles that attracted star performers despite relatively low pay; insisting that their work be judged by the highest standards, they brought critics to their openings; and in their productions they provided full sets and complete costumes, created by established designers yet built for roughly half the Broadway price. None of these practices had been attempted off-Broadway prior to the Phoenix, but within fifteen years all had become standard procedures for such productions.

After this transformation of off-Broadway, Hambleton developed further innovations that were followed by other nonprofit managers. He championed fully-mounted productions of classic plays years before the widespread accep-

tance of revivals in the early 1970s, and he was the first nonprofit producer to realize significant returns by transferring productions to commercial runs. Furthermore, in the late 1970s, when critics and other producers assumed that off-Broadway production had become too expensive to support the development of new work,³ Hambleton reconfirmed off-Broadway's validity as a market for experimentation with new plays. In 1977 he mounted full productions of previously unproduced plays despite the prevalent trend to rely upon off off-Broadway workshops for the development of new work, and his productions at the Marymount Manhattan Theatre set a precedent for the work of MTC and Playwrights Horizons in the early 1980s.

Not all of Hambleton's innovations, however, proved as fruitful as those mentioned above, and several of his projects ended in failure. The most prominent among his failed efforts was his attempt to create a repertory troupe in New York, which began when Hambleton and Norris Houghton announced their intention to form a permanent acting company at the Phoenix in 1956, three years before the Ford Foundation decided to help fund permanent companies and seven years before the Lincoln Center Repertory Company opened its doors. Hambleton's tenacious pursuit of repertory lasted nineteen years and saw him pool his efforts with several directors: Stuart Vaughan (1958-61); Ellis Rabb (1964-69); Harold Prince, Stephen Porter, and

Michael Montel (1972-75); and Daniel Freudenberg (1975-76). Hambleton finally accepted defeat only after nearly two decades, and in 1976 he acknowledged that the expense of operating a permanent repertory troupe in New York was simply too high to justify further effort. Although it ended in defeat, Hambleton's attempt to provide repertory in New York is a remarkable feat that dwarfs the efforts of all other producers of the period.⁴

Hambleton's dogged pursuit of repertory may suggest that he was merely stubborn, but it is also evidence of other character traits that influenced his management of the Phoenix throughout his career: ambition and impractical optimism. His intention to create a company "of such quality that it [would] be the measure for the entire country and eventually for the world,"⁵ was clearly ambitious, and his predictable failure to attain his goal verifies the sometimes impractical optimism that pervaded his two-decade quest of repertory.

Impracticality and optimism are pervasive traits that can be seen in others who have worked to reform the theatre. Norris Houghton's vision for reform, which provided the impetus for the Phoenix Theatre, was certainly optimistic. He and Hambleton knew that they were carrying on a tradition steeped in optimism, and they consciously borrowed strategies from the Theatre Guild, which was founded in 1918 with the belief that a profes-

sional art theatre could present plays shunned by the commercial theatre and support itself through box office receipts.⁶ Hambleton was a close friend of John Houseman, another proponent of this optimism, and he retained close ties with Houseman throughout the three decades that he managed the Phoenix.⁷ Others have carried on this tradition with varying degrees of success: Joseph Papp, believing that Shakespeare should and could be offered free of charge to the public, founded the New York Shakespeare Festival in 1953; Herbert Blau and Jules Irving, having attained success with the Actors Workshop as an anti-establishment acting troupe in San Francisco, brought their ideals to the heart of commercialism in 1965; and Robert Brustein, though doubting that academia and professional theatre could cohabit the same program, accepted the post of Dean at Yale School of Drama and founded Yale Repertory in 1966.⁸

Other programs undertaken by Hambleton, though less grand in scope than his effort to bring repertory to New York, also reflect this pervasive optimism. Notable among these programs are the Anderson Theatre Project and the Playwrights Commissioning Program, both of which preceded similar programs that have blossomed elsewhere. Although the Anderson Theatre Project of 1963 may not have served as the model for the 1967 programs at Inner City Repertory in San Francisco, Repertory Theatre of New Orleans, and

Trinity Square Theatre in Providence, the similarities of these programs to Hambleton's plan are striking. In fact, the Anderson Theatre Project could have been used as a blueprint for them.⁹ Like the Anderson Theatre Project, Hambleton's Playwrights' Commissioning Program of 1979 bears a striking resemblance to a subsequent effort. David Emmes and Martin Benson's South Coast Repertory has instituted a commissioning program that is very similar in structure to the program used by Hambleton at the Phoenix.¹⁰

Hambleton was stubborn, and his wealth gave him great independence. Since he did not rely upon producing plays for his livelihood, he could afford to pursue projects that held no interest for other producers. His interests were often out of step with the times that surrounded him, a circumstance which, though occasionally a handicap, was often an advantage. The 1950s productions of Shakespeare at the Phoenix, for example, were dismissed by Robert Brustein as musty and reminiscent of the Old Vic,¹¹ and Hambleton's interest in repertory extended years past the efforts of others. More often, however, Hambleton's work presaged what was to come. Under Hambleton's guidance, the Phoenix championed a season of plays ten years before any other theatre in New York¹² and student audience enhancement eleven years before such efforts gained wide usage and government subsidy.¹³ Its innovative structure

created contractual inconsistencies with Actors' Equity that were not resolved until 1966 when Equity ratified its contract with the League of Regional Theatres.¹⁴

Furthermore, nonprofit-to-profit transfers, which Hambleton introduced in the 1960s and 1970s, and commissioning programs for new plays, which Hambleton endorsed in 1978, have later won wide acceptance.

Although an idealist and an optimist, Hambleton was less a dreamer than a doer, and a cautious one at that. He never issued a manifesto that announced his intentions and ambitions. Despite his lack of clearly stated goals, the choices he made during his career suggest that, dissatisfied with the limitations he encountered as a producer in the late 1930s, he wished to create an alternative theatre that would free artists from the narrow choices dictated by Broadway's enslavement to the box office. The plays he produced early in his career, such as Robin Landing, Galileo, and The Great Campaign, were foreign to Broadway, and his involvement with the ANTA Experimental Theatre further demonstrated his refusal to accept the shackles that bound Broadway producers of the period. In Norris Houghton he found a kindred spirit, a practicing artist also disenchanted with the limitations of the box office. Together they set out to create an alternative theatre that stood on equal terms with Broadway.

Nothing about their situation suggested that they would succeed. Given Broadway's dominance and the preponderance of college-bred activity off-Broadway, an art theatre with professional pretensions seemed impractical and hopelessly naïve. But the partners persevered, and together they founded a theatre that set precedents during a period of three decades. During his twenty-nine year management of the Phoenix Theatre, Hambleton introduced numerous significant innovations that are now widely accepted. He proved that a season of plays could be presented in lieu of a long run; that well-established actors would forsake commercial production if given challenging roles at minimal pay; that an art theatre could pay its artists a respectable wage; that a professional theatre could operate as a nonprofit entity; and that audiences, corporations, and foundations would support nonprofit theatre.

The wide variety of Hambleton's initiatives has occasionally been perceived as a weakness and has allowed critics to portray his guidance of the Phoenix as inconsistent and irresolute. When the Phoenix finally ceased operation in 1982, Michael Feingold and Clive Barnes offered retrospective articles, and both felt that the Phoenix had vacillated from one project to another. Feingold treated the issue briefly, but Barnes offered a lengthy statement:

Over the years the Phoenix had many lives and assumed many faces. Perhaps too many. It always seemed to lack directness and consistency in its purpose. This lack of clear artistic identity and profile apart, the Phoenix has done remarkable work. Its list of actors, directors and playwrights--to say nothing of designers and the technical rest [sic]--literally reads like a roll call of American theatre. What it didn't do, except briefly when it was under Rabb's aegis--was form a permanent company, a thorough, ongoing institution, rather than a mystic production banner. It was urged to do just that by the likes of Tyrone Guthrie and John Houseman, but that fulfillment never seemed practical. A pity. The Phoenix became a brand name rather than a theatre company, an idea rather than a philosophy, an improvisation rather than a monument. . . Perhaps if the Phoenix had acquired a building, a permanent company, and a more furthering, consistent artistic policy, it might have become the kind of national treasure that the New York City Ballet is today. It didn't, and we must not waste tears on opportunities lost.¹⁵

Barnes' statement is characteristic of critical response to the Phoenix in two ways: it recognizes the Phoenix more for its failures than for its successes, and it sees no consistent vision in Hambleton's efforts. From another point of view, however, although the various transformations of the Phoenix during its history may lend credence to Barnes' claim of inconsistency, the programs that Hambleton initiated came not from a concern for consistency, which Ralph Waldo Emerson called the "hobgoblin of little minds," but from a commitment to experimentation.

This commitment was apparent throughout Hambleton's management of the Phoenix, and through his experiments Hambleton proved that avenues which appeared to be impractical dead ends might be the most productive routes

to explore. Although he never announced such a belief publicly, Hambleton's penchant for unconventional projects--from Robin Landing in 1937 to the Playwrights' Commissioning Program in 1978--confirms his commitment to the pursuit of unorthodox ventures that may have seemed misguided to practical-minded, box-office-oriented producers. Often during his career, however, Hambleton's apparently impractical experiments introduced production strategies that later won broad support. Hambleton, the "misguided," impractical optimist, believed that off-Broadway would support professional institutional theatre in 1953. Not until the mid-1960s, when he was proven right, did other New York producers convert to nonprofit status. His firmly held belief that the legitimate stage was obligated to offer classic plays to its audience ran counter to the production trends of the 1950s and 1960s, but by 1976 other producers had accepted revivals of classics and even Broadway offered its audience more revivals than new plays.¹⁶ In 1976, Hambleton disagreed with the bevy of producers who were abandoning off-Broadway, and his staunch march against this trend helped to reclaim off-Broadway as a venue for experimentation with new plays.

The various efforts of Hambleton's career were informed by two ideals that characterize all of Hambleton's work: a belief that the division between commer-

cial and nonprofit theatre is superficial, and a belief in the value of a large and diverse volume of work.

The second of these beliefs was apparent in 1936 with Hambleton's first venture into production at Theatre-by-the-Sea in Matunuck, Rhode Island, before he began producing plays in New York City. In his first season there, Hambleton produced eight productions, presenting an eight-week repertoire that featured recent Broadway successes mixed with Molnar's Liliom and adaptations of Around the World in Eighty Days and The Brothers Karamazov.¹⁷

This commitment to a large volume of varied works is evident throughout Hambleton's management of the Phoenix. When it opened in 1953, Hambleton presented a season that employed over one hundred actors, mounted more productions than any other producer in the city, and offered works ranging from Sidney Howard's Madam Will You Walk? to Coriolanus and The Sea Gull. Hambleton's later work with Ellis Rabb further reflects this commitment. During its tenure at the Lyceum, the APA-Phoenix presented six productions in repertory each season and offered a varied program which included works by Ionesco, Ghelderode, O'Casey, and Eliot. Even during the last years of the Phoenix when Hambleton was pursuing the development of new work and was producing on a much smaller scale than he had with the APA-Phoenix and the New Phoenix Repertory, his

belief in a large and varied repertoire was apparent. Hambleton's decision in 1978 to commission six plays each season dwarfed previous attempts to commission new work,¹⁸ and until the Phoenix closed in 1983 he balanced his encouragement of new American writers with productions of important new international voices such as Mustapha Matura and Botho Strauss.

Hambleton's belief that there should be no chasm between commercial and nonprofit production is equally evident in his management of the Phoenix. In 1957 The Phoenix shifted from commercial enterprise to nonprofit institution, but in doing so it did not alter its course. Hambleton and Houghton had established the Phoenix to provide an alternative legitimate theatre, and neither their purpose nor their repertoire changed perceptibly with the alteration in financial structure.¹⁹

Generally, one must rely upon such evidence as the record of productions mounted by the Phoenix to support assertions about Hambleton's intentions because he seldom wrote opinions regarding production or theory. In 1964, however, Hambleton expressed his views on the division between commercial and nonprofit production in a letter to Harold Prince. Prince had just published a New York Times article in which he had lashed out at nonprofit partisans who had denounced commercial production as somehow soiled:

I don't agree with you entirely, but to see the Broadway artist defending his position against that old rascal repertory was such a change from the fair young maiden I had known for so many years trodden down by the insensitive villain Broadway. All of this further serves to place commercial and non-commercial [producers] on a basis that will allow them to help themselves by helping each other and, in the process, expand the theatre by involving that vast potential audience that presently manages to do without any theater whatsoever.²⁰

Previously Hambleton had demonstrated his belief that the division between commercial and nonprofit theatre was groundless by employing directors with commercial backgrounds: George Abbott had directed Once Upon a Mattress in 1959, Prince had directed The Matchmaker in 1961, and Jerome Robbins had mounted Oh, Dad in 1962. Hambleton had also begun his efforts to exploit the commercial potential of Phoenix productions by offering Mary Stuart and Once Upon a Mattress in commercial tours through the establishment of the National Phoenix in 1959. He continued this effort later with his transfer of You Can't Take It With You to Broadway in 1965 and his tour of The Show Off in 1968. Other nonprofit producers have since profited more handsomely than Hambleton from transfers to commercial settings, but he was the first to prove that the tactic was feasible.²¹

Throughout his career, T. Edward Hambleton strove to provide an alternative theatre that would expand the repertoire of the professional New York stage. Not given to proselytizing, he made no formal announcement of his

intentions. Instead, he simply went to work, keeping in mind his goal to provide a professional venue that would offer plays that the commercial theatre shunned. Above all, his vision was inclusive: he considered his work neither a mission against Broadway nor a platform from which to attack the conventions that he challenged. He was instrumental in the development of off-Broadway and of nonprofit production in New York, but he did not intend his work to be a refutation of the commercial theatre. He believed in the inherent value of an expansive repertoire, and in his tenacious attempt to validate this belief he created a variety of production strategies that are now commonplace for nonprofit theatres. During his forty-five-year career as a producer and particularly during his three-decade management of the Phoenix Theatre, he set many precedents that have previously gone unheralded, and his accomplishments deserve far more recognition than they have received.

APPENDIX

A LIST OF PRODUCTIONS MOUNTED BY THE PHOENIX THEATRE

1953-1982

1953-54

Madam Will You Walk?

Author: Sidney Howard

Director: Hume Cronyn

Coriolanus

Author: William Shakespeare

Director: John Houseman

The Golden Apple

Lyrics: John Latouche

Music: Jerome Moross

Director: Norman Lloyd

The Seagull

Author: Anton Chekhov

Adaptors: Mira Rostova, Kevin McCarthy, Montgomery Clift

Director: Norris Houghton

1954-55

Sing Me No Lullaby

Author: Robert Ardrey

Director: Paul Stewart

Sandhog

Book: Waldo Salt

Music: Earl Robinson

Director: Howard da Silva

1954-55 (continued)

The Master Builder

Author: Henrik Ibsen

Adaptor: Max Faber

Director: Oscar Homolka

Phoenix '55

Sketches: Ira Wallach

Lyrics: David Craig

Music: David Baker

Director: Marc Daniels

The Doctor's Dilemma

Author: George Bernard Shaw

Director: Sidney Lumet

Sideshows

The Theatre of Angna Enters

The White Devil by John Webster,
directed by Jack Landau

The History of a Soldier by Igor
Stravinsky and N. Richard Nash

Moby Dick by Herman Melville, adapted
by Howard Rodman

1955-56

The Carefree Tree

Author: Aldyth Morris

Director: Jack Landau

Six Characters in Search of an Author

Author: Luigi Pirandello

Adaptors: Tyrone Guthrie, Michael Wager

Director: Tyrone Guthrie

Miss Julie and The Stronger

Author: August Strindberg

Adaptor: George Tabori

Director: George Tabori

A Month in the Country

Author: Ivan Turgenev

Adaptor: Emlyn Williams

Director: Michael Redgrave

The Littlest Revue

Assembled by Ben Bagley as conceived by the cast

Lyrics: Ogden Nash

Music: Vernon Duke

Director: Ben Bagley

Sideshows

Marcel Marceau (United States premiere)

Anna Christie by Eugene O'Neill

The Terrible, Swift Sword by Arthur Steuer

Venice Preserved by Thomas Otway

Bil and Cora Baird's Marionette Theatre

Characters and Chicanery by Joyce Carol

Oates with magic by Fred Keating

1955-56 Sideshows (contintued)

The Adding Machine by Elmer Rice
The Mother of Us All by Gertrude Stein and
 Virgil Thomsom
Queen After Death by Henry de Montherlant
Four Premieres by the Ballet Theatre Work-
 shop

1956-57

Saint Joan

Author: George Bernard Shaw
 Director: Albert Marre

Diary of a Scoundrel

Author: Alexander Ostrovski
 Adaptor: Rodney Ackland
 Director: Alan Cooke

The Good Woman of Setzuan

Author: Bertolt Brecht
 Translator: Eric Bentley
 Director: Eric Bentley

Measure for Measure

Author: William Shakespeare
 Directors: John Houseman and Jack Landau

The Taming of the Shrew

Author: William Shakespeare
 Director: Norman Lloyd

The Duchess of Malfi

Author: John Webster
 Director: Jack Landau

Livin' the Life

Book: Dale Wasserman and Bruce Geller
 Lyrics: Bruce Geller
 Music: Jack Urbont
 Director: David Alexander

Sideshows

The Merry-Go-Rounders
 Bil and Cora Baird's Marionettes
 Ballet Theatre Workshop

1957-58

Mary Stuart

Author: Friedrich Schiller

Adaptors: Jean Stock Goldstone and John Reich

Director: Tyrone Guthrie

The Makropoulos Secret

Author: Karel Capek

Adaptor: Tyrone Guthrie

Director: Tyrone Guthrie

The Chairs and The Lesson

Author: Eugene Ionesco

Translator: Donald Watson

Director: Tony Richardson

The Infernal Machine

Author: Jean Cocteau

Adaptor: Albert Bermel

Director: Herbert Berghof

Two Gentlemen of Verona

Author: William Shakespeare

Director: Michael Langham

A Stratford Festival of Canada Production

The Broken Jug

Author: Heinrich von Kleist

Adaptor: Donald Harron

Director: Michael Langham

A Stratford Festival of Canada Production

Le Malade Imaginaire

Author: Molière

Director: Jean Gascon

Le Theatre Du Nouveau Monde Production

Le Mariage Forcé, Sgnarelle, La Jalousie du Barbouille

Author: Molière

Directors: Jean Gascon and Jean Dalmain

Le Theatre Du Nouveau Monde Production

Sideshows

The World of Cili WangTobias and the Angel by James BridieFor Humans Only, Lotte Goslar's Pantomime
CircusA Sleep of Prisoners by Christopher Fry

The Marionette Theatre of Braunschweig

Everyman Today by Walter SorelThe Transposed Heads by Peggy Glanville-
Hicks

1958-59 (continued)

The Beaux' Stratagem

Author: George Farquhar

Director: Stuart Vaughan

Once Upon a Mattress

Book: Jay Thompson, Marshall Barer, and Dean Fuller

Lyrics: Marshall Barer

Music: Mary Rodgers

Director: George Abbott

Sideshows

Britannicus by Racine: Le Théâtre du Vieux-Colombier de Paris

The Theatre of Angna Enters

Steve Allen and Jazz at the Phoenix

The World of Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart with Eleanor Stewart

1959-60

The Great God Brown

Author: Eugene O'Neill

Director: Stuart Vaughan

Lysistrata

Author: Aristophanes

Adaptor: Dudley Fitts

Director: Jean Gascon

Pictures in the Hallway

Author: Sean O'Casey

Adaptor: Paul Shyre

Director: Stuart Vaughan

Peer Gynt

Author: Henrik Ibsen

Adaptor: Norman Ginsbury

Director: Stuart Vaughan

Henry IV, Part 1

Author: William Shakespeare

Director: Stuart Vaughan

Henry IV, Part 2

Author: William Shakespeare

Director: Stuart Vaughan

Sideshows

L'Otage by Paul Claudel: Le Théâtre du Vieux-Colombier de Paris

Le Misanthrope by Molière: Le Théâtre du Vieux-Colombier de Paris

The Merce Cunningham Dance Company

Theatre of Angna Enters

1960-61

H.M.S. Pinafore

Lyrics: William S. Gilbert

Music: Arthur Sullivan

Director: Tyrone Guthrie

A Stratford Festival of Canada Production

The Plough and the Stars

Author: Sean O'Casey

Director: Stuart Vaughan

She Stoops to Conquer

Author: Oliver Goldsmith

Director: Stuart Vaughan

The Octoroon

Author: Dion Boucicault

Director: Stuart Vaughan

Hamlet

Author: William Shakespeare

Director: Stuart Vaughan

Sideshows

Yuriko Dance Company

Tamaris Dance Company

1961-62

The Pirates of Penzance

Lyrics: William S. Gilbert

Music: Arthur Sullivan

Directors: Tyrone Guthrie and Norman Campbell

A Stratford Festival of Canada Production

The Policemen

Author: Slawomir Mrozek

Adaptor: Leonides D-Ossetynski

Director: Leonides D-Ossetynski

Androcles and the Lion

Author: George Bernard Shaw

Director: Tom Gruenewald

The Dark Lady of the Sonnets

Author: George Bernard Shaw

Director: Tom Gruenewald

Who'll Save the Plowboy?

Author: Frank D. Gilroy

Director: Daniel Petrie

Oh Dad, Poor Dad, Momma's Hung You in the Closet andI'm Feeling So Sad

Author: Arthur Kopit

Director: Jerome Robbins

Sideshows

But It Is Nothing by Maria Chorafa

1962-63

Abe Lincoln in Illinois

Author: Robert E. Sherwood

Director: Stuart Vaughan

The Taming of the Shrew

Author: William Shakespeare

Director: Stuart Vaughan

The Dragon

Author: Eugene Schwarz

Translator: Elizabeth Reynolds Hapgood

Director: Joseph Anthony

The Matchmaker

Author: Thornton Wilder

Director: Harold Prince

Sideshows

Persephone by Joan KarmeniNancy Cole's Theatre of the Little Hand

1963-64

Morning Sun

Book and Lyrics: Fred Ebb

Music: Paul Klein

Director: Daniel Petrie

Next Time I'll Sing to You

Author: James Saunders

Director: Peter Coe

Too Much Johnson

Author: William Gillette

Adaptor: Burt Shevelove

Director: Burt Shevelove

The Brontes by Margaret Webster

1963-64 (with APA)

Right You Are

Author: Luigi Pirandello

Translator: Eric Bentley

Director: Stephen Porter

The Tavern

Author: George M. Cohan

Director: Ellis Rabb

Scapin/Impromptu at Versailles

Author: Molière

Translators: Ellis Rabb, Stephen Porter

Director: Stephen Porter

The Lower Depths

Author: Maxim Gorky

Translator: Alex Szogyi

Director: Ellis Rabb

1964-65

Doctor Faustus

Author: Christopher Marlowe

Director: Word Baker

1964-65 (with APA)

Man and Superman

Author: George Bernard Shaw

Director: Stephen Porter

War and Peace

Adapted by Alfred Neuman, Erwin Piscator, and
Guntram Prufer from Leo Tolstoy's novel

Director: Ellis Rabb

Judith

Author: Jean Giraudoux

Translator: John K. Savacool

Director: Ellis Rabb

1965-66 (with APA)

The Wild Duck

Author: Henrik Ibsen

Translator: Eve le Gallienne

Director: Stephen Porter

Herakles

Author: Archibald MacLeish

Director: Alan Schneider

Krapp's Last Tape

Author: Samuel Beckett

Director: Alan Schneider

You Can't Take It with You

Authors: Moss Hart and George S. Kaufman

Director: Ellis Rabb

1966-67 (with APA)

The School for Scandal

Author: Richard Brinsley Sheridan

Director: Ellis Rabb

We Comrades, Three

Author: Richard Baldrige (based on writings by Walt
Whitman)

Directors: Ellis Rabb and Hal George

War and Peace (see above)

The Wild Duck (see above)

You Can't Take It with You (see above)

Right You Are (see above)

1967-68 (with APA)

Pantaglieize

Author: Michel de Ghelderode

Translator: George Hauger

Directors: John Houseman and Ellis Rabb

1967-68 (continued)

The Show-Off

Author: George Kelly
Director: Stephen Porter

Exit the King

Author: Eugene Ionesco
Translator: Donald Watson
Director: Ellis Rabb

The Cherry Orchard

Author: Anton Chekhov
Translator: Eva le Gallienne
Director: Eva le Gallienne

1968-69 (with APA)

The Cocktail Party

Author: T. S. Eliot
Director: Philip Minor

The Misanthrope

Author: Molière
Translator: Richard Wilbur
Director: Stephen Porter

Cock-a-Doodle Dandy

Author: Sean O'Casey
Directors: Jack O'Brien and Donald Moffat

Hamlet

Author: William Shakespeare
Director: Ellis Rabb

1969-70

Harvey

Author: Mary Chase
Director: Stephen Porter

The Criminals

Author: José Triana
Adaptor: Adrian Mitchell
Director: David Wheeler

The Persians

Author: Aeschylus
Adaptor: John Lewis
Director: Gordon Duffey

1970-71

The Trial of the Catonsville Nine

Author: Daniel Berrigan
Director: Gordon Davidson

The School for Wives

Author: Molière
Translator: Richard Wilbur
Director: Stephen Porter

1971-72

Murderous Angels

Author: Conor Cruise O'Brien

Director: Gordon Davidson

1972-73

The Great God Brown

Author: Eugene O'Neill

Director: Harold Prince

Don Juan

Author: Molière

Adapter: Stephen Porter

Director: Stephen Porter

Sideshows

A Meeting by the River by Christopher Isherwood and Don BachardyStrike Heaven on the Face by Richard WesleyGames/After Liverpool by James SaundersGovernment Inspector by Gogol adapted by Peter RabiHoray [sic] by David Kranes

1973-74

The Visit

Author: Friedrich Dürrenmatt

Translator: Maurice Valency

Director: Harold Prince

Chemin de Fer

Author: Georges Feydeau

Translators: Suzanne Grossmann and Paxton Whitehead

Director: Steven Porter

Holiday

Author: Philip Barry

Director: Michael Montel

Sideshows

Miracle Play by Joyce Carol OatesRemovalists by David WilliamsonIn the Voodoo Parlour of Marie Leveau by Frank GaglianoEnergy Crisis by Daffy NathansonPretzels by John Forster

1974-75

Love for Love

Author: William Congreve

Director: Harold Prince

1974-75 (continued)

The Rules of the Game

Author: Luigi Pirandello
Translator: William Murray
Director: Stephen Porter

The Member of the Wedding

Author: Carson McCullers
Director: Michael Montel

Sideshows

Knuckle by David Hare

Dandelion Wine by Ray Bradbury, adapted by
Peter John Bailey

Meeting Place by Robert Lord

Macrune's Guevera by John Spurling

Flux by Susan Miller

1975-76

27 Wagons Full of Cotton

Author: Tennessee Williams
Director: Arvin Brown

A Memory of Two Mondays

Author: Arthur Miller
Director: Arvin Brown

They Knew What They Wanted

Author: Sidney Howard
Director: Stephen Porter

Secret Service

Author: William Gillette
Director: Daniel Freudenberger

Boy Meets Girl

Authors: Bella and Sam Spewack
Director: John Lithgow

1976-77

Ladyhouse Blues

Author: Kevin O'Morrison
Director: Tony Giordano

Canadian Gothic/American Modern

Author: Joanna M. Glass
Director: Daniel Freudenberger

Marco Polo

Author: Jonathan Levy
Director: Lynne Meadow

A Sorrow Beyond Dreams

Author: Peter Handke
Translator: Ralph Manheim
Director: Daniel Freudenberger

G. R. Point

Author: David Berry
Director: Tony Giordano

1976-77 (continued)

Scribes

Author: Barrie Keefe
Director: Keith Hack

1977-78

Hot Grog

Book: Jim Wann
Lyrics: Bland Simpson and Jim Wann
Music: Bland Simpson and Jim Wann
Director: Edward Berkeley

Uncommon Women and Others

Author: Wendy Wasserstein
Director: Steven Robman

The Elusive Angel

Author: Jack Gilhooley
Director: Steven Robman

One Crack Out

Author: David French
Director: Daniel Freudenberger

City Sugar

Author: Stephen Poliakoff
Director: Daniel Freudenberger

1978-79

Getting Out

Author: Marsha Norman
Director: Jon Jory

Later

Author: Corinne Jacker
Director: Daniel Freudenberger

Says I, Says He

Author: Ron Hutchinson
Director: Steven Robman

Big and Little

Author: Botho Strauss
Translator: Anne Cattaneo
Director: Daniel Freudenberger

Chinchilla

Author: Robert David MacDonald
Director: Philip Prowse

1979-80

The Winter Dancers

Author: David Lan
Director: Keith Hack

Shout Across the River

Author: Stephen Poliakoff
Director: Robert Woodruff

1979-80 (continued)

The Trouble with Europe

Author: Paul D'Andrea

Director: Daniel Freudenberger

Save Grand Central

Author: William Hamilton

Director: Gene Saks

Second Avenue Rag

Author: Allan Knee

Director: Gerald Freedman

1980-81

Bonjour, Là, Bonjour

Author: Michel Tremblay

Translators: John van Burek and Bill Glassco

Director: Steven Robman

Beyond Therapy

Author: Christopher Durang

Director: Jerry Zaks

The Captivity of Pixie Shedman

Author: Romulus Linney

Director: John Pasquin

Meetings

Author: Mustapha Matura

Director: Gerald Gutierrez

Isn't It Romantic

Author: Wendy Wasserstein

Director: Steven Robman

1981-82

Maggie and Pierre

Authors: Linda Griffiths and Paul Thompson

Director: Paul Thompson

After the Prize

Author: Fay Weldon

Director: Steven Robman

Kaufman at Large

Adapted by John Lithgow from George S. Kaufman's writings

Director: John Lithgow with Steven Robman

Weekends Like Other People

Author: David Blomquist

Director: Ulu Grossbard

1982-83

Two Fish in the Sky

Author: Michael Hastings

Director: Steven Robman

NOTES FOR CHAPTER ONE

1. Howard did not include the question mark in the title.
2. Norris Houghton, "The Phoenix Rises," New York Times, 29 November 1953, sec. 2, p. 1.
3. T. Edward Hambleton, cited in Cue, 5 December 1953, 17.
4. This theatre had been named the Yiddish Folk Theatre in 1934 and the Century Theatre in 1937 when it was converted into a cinema. By 1953 it was being called the Stuyvesant Theatre, and Hambleton and Houghton renamed it the Phoenix Theatre. I hereafter refer to it as the Twelfth Street Theatre in order to avoid confusion with the theatres that the Phoenix later occupied.
5. See p. 68.
6. George Jean Nathan. New York Journal-American. 27 December 1953.
7. Eric Bentley, New Republic, 1 February 1954, 22-3.
8. Albert Bermel, "The Phoenix Has Two Heads," Tulane Drama Review 4, no. 1 (September 1959): 80.
9. The apparent discrepancy between this date of Houghton's departure from the Phoenix and that provided on page 91 is explained by the fact that Houghton resigned as co-manager twice. He left originally in 1959 to teach full-time at Vassar College. Shortly after returning to the Phoenix in 1961, he became head of the theatre department at Vassar. Although his involvement with the Phoenix was necessarily limited from that time on, he did not officially resign for the second time until 1964.
10. Norris Houghton, Entrances and Exits: A Life In and Out of the Theatre (New York: Limelight Editions, 1991), 279.
11. Ibid.

12. Because of its vast size, the collection is uncatalogued, but the Beinecke Library has on disk a copy of the notes I took as I examined it box-by-box.

NOTES FOR CHAPTER TWO

1. Norris Houghton, Entrances and Exits, 214. Houghton offers an entertaining account of the founding of the Phoenix on this and the following pages.

2. The Republican Party made a campaign issue of the Alger Hiss conviction. Joseph R. McCarthy had claimed there were 200 communists in the State Department. James Reston, "Defamation Marks Violent Campaign," New York Times, 31 October 1950, 22, complained that there was a "theme, carefully outlined in the Republican National Committee's candidate's handbook, that our international troubles resulted from a dark conspiracy." The plan was an overwhelming success and created a record turn out for a non-presidential election: forty million voters. Richard Nixon won in California on a campaign focused primarily upon his activity on the House Committee on Un-American Activities. New York Times, 8 November 1950, 1, reported: "Senator Millard E. Tydings, chairman of the Armed Services Committee and political veteran of great distinction, lost in Maryland to John Marshall Butler, a newcomer, on the charge that he had glossed over Communist infiltration in conducting an inquiry into charges to that effect by Senator Joseph R. McCarthy of Wisconsin." Everett Dirksen, using the same theme, defeated the then Senate Majority Leader, Scott Lucas.

3. See Laurence Kitchin, Mid-Century Drama (London: Faber and Faber, 1960), pp. 56-71. Kitchin claims that Miller and Williams were the primary influence on young English dramatists of the 1950s.

4. Stuart W. Little, Off-Broadway: The Prophetic Theatre, (New York: Coward, McCann, and Geohegan, 1972), 140-41.

5. Houghton, Entrances and Exits, pp. 190-93. The first critic cited is Richard Watts in his first night review; the second is Brooks Atkinson in one of his two attempts to bolster box office response to the play.

Houghton also explains that he kept the play open during its final weeks in reaction to assurances from

Maurice Valency that it would win the Pulitzer Prize. Valency, one of the three members of the jury appointed to nominate plays, told Hambleton that the jury had selected Billy Budd. The Pulitzer board, however, rejected the jury's selection and awarded the prize to Arthur Koestler's Darkness at Noon.

6. Christian Science Monitor, 24 June 1936.

7. The reviews appeared on 19 November 1937. Those finding it dull included Sidney B. Whipple, New York World-Telegram; Richard Lockridge, New York Sun; John Mason Brown, New York Post; and John Anderson, New York Journal-American. Whipple, Anderson, and Richard Watts, Jr. New York Tribune were bothered by the language.

8. Burns Mantle, review of Robin Landing, New York News: 19 November 1937.

9. Edba, review of The Great Campaign, Variety, 2 April 1947.

10. John F. Matthews, Instructor of Playwriting at City College, New York Times 2 November 1947, sec. 2, p. 2. Letters written in reaction to Matthews that supported ANTA were printed 9 November 1947, sec. 2, p. 2. Among those writing were Kappo Phelan of Commonweal and Eric Bentley.

11. John Chapman, Best Plays of 1947-48 (New York: Dodd, Mead, 1948), 409.

12. Cheryl Crawford, "Explaining the Experimental Theatre's Policy," New York Times, 7 December 1947, sec. 2, p. 6.

13. Houghton, Entrances and Exits, 220.

14. Mielziner designed all three of these productions. Joshua Logan directed the first two and John van Druten directed the third.

15. Howard was killed in a farm accident in 1939, and Behrman left the company late in 1945. Only three members remained, and none of them were providing producible scripts. For a full account of how this organization began to produce the plays of outsiders see John F. Wharton, Life Among the Playwrights (New York: Quadrangle/New York Times Book Company), 1974, pp. 185-203.

16. Bloomgarden and Gilbert Miller co-produced Hellman's Montserrat in 1949. The other Hellman plays

produced by Bloomgarden were Another Part of the Forest (1946), The Autumn Garden (1951), and The Children's Hour (1952).

17. Variety, 26 December 1951, 52, claimed the engagement was 80% sold before opening. Selling out at this price required very strong box office appeal. Ticket prices for straight plays during that season were \$4.80 weeknights and \$6.00 Fridays and Saturdays, and the Olivier/Leigh engagement was charging \$7.20 for every performance. Even musicals did not command such prices. The top price for Guys and Dolls, the hottest blockbuster in town, was \$6.60.

18. The loss figure cited for Red Gloves is from Variety, 16 March 1949, 51. The Respectable Prostitute managed a run of 348 performances in 1947-8, but this play was more a guignol melodrama than a philosophical tract. Box office appeal was aided by the play's topicality; the central character was a black man wrongfully accused of the rape of a white prostitute, and racial tensions were a national issue. Louis Calta reported that the production planned for Chicago was originally banned by the police department because it felt that the racial theme was so strongly emphasized as to threaten public safety, New York Times, 21 October 1948, 32.

19. Anouilh still had found no audience by the mid-fifties. See Vernon Rice, New York Post, 4 January 1954 and George Jean Nathan, New York Journal-American, 19 February 1955.

20. Variety, 11 January 1950, 53, reported a \$26,000 profit for Madwoman at the New York closing before the play started a national tour. In contrast, Variety, 23 May 1951, 56, reported a \$100,000 loss for Ring Around the Moon.

21. During the last two theatrical seasons of the war, total productions on Broadway were 97 and 92 respectively. Variety, 7 June 1961, 65.

22. Figures for 1947-48 through 1951-52 are from Variety, 5 June 1952, 55. Those from 1952-53 are from Variety, 1 June 1955, 61.

23. A playing week is one week's performances for one production. If 10 shows play 10 weeks each, the total is 100 playing weeks.

24. The D'Oyly Carte Opera Company had also visited the United States during the 1947-48 season, and its New

York schedule for that engagement further suggests Broadway's decline. In 1947-48, the D'Oyly Carte offered nine productions and 132 performances; three years later it presented only five productions and 32 performances.

Both the New York Times, 27 May 1955, sec. 2, p. 4, and Variety, 23 May 1951, 55, claimed that the ANTA and D'Oyly Carte performances distorted the figure for total productions during the 1950-51 season.

25. For discussions of this feeble attempt at repertory on Broadway see Henry Hewes, Saturday Review, 26 April 1952, 25-7; Lewis Funke, New York Times, 24 August 1952, sec. 2, p. 1.

26. New York Times, 31 March 1952, 31.

27. The Playwrights Company had done only nine productions in four seasons. Though five of these had come in the 1951-52 and 1952-53 seasons, none of them (aside from The Fourposter) had gained a following. The combined run for the other four productions was 114 performances, just over 14 playing weeks. These figures are from Wharton, 294-98.

28. This was a common complaint in the early 1950s, and statistics have been cited to both challenge and to defend its veracity. Thomas Gale Moore, The Economics of American Theatre (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1968), 33, offers a chart that shows no appreciable alteration in the ratio of musicals, comedies, and dramas to total productions from 1927 to 1966. However, Moore's numbers include shows that closed on opening night as well as those that ran for a full season. Stuart W. Little, "A Dollar and Cents View," Theatre Arts 45, no. 5 (May 1961), 14, provides a chart from 1950 to 1961 of total productions, musicals, and revues and notes that total productions during the decade shrunk as the percentage of musicals increased. Certainly Houghton's concern, if not factually accurate, was prophetic. One need not refer to charts to convincingly argue that the focus of today's Broadway is the musical.

29. Houghton, New York Times, 29 November 1953, sec. 2, p. 1.

30. Houghton, Entrances and Exits, 219.

31. Among those stating that this production specifically marks the beginning of off-Broadway are Bernard Hewitt, Theatre U.S.A., 1665 to 1957 (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1959), 457, and Samuel L. Leiter, Ten Seasons: New

York Theatre in the Seventies. (New York: Greenwood, 1986), 2.

32. The most notable work here is Pierre Biner, Le Living Theatre (Lausanne: La Cité, 1968), translated by Biner and published in New York by Horizon Press, 1972. Also, Brustein's first assignment as a reviewer for The New Republic was The Living Theatre's production of The Connection. For some time he openly praised Beck and Malina. He refers to them in glowing terms throughout Seasons of Discontent, (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1965), claiming that when they folded the heart went out of the off-Broadway movement.

33. Revivals included The Beggar's Opera, A Doll's House, The Father, East Lynne, The Contrast, and The Adding Machine. Plays by Sartre mounted in the period were The Respectable Prostitute, Church Street, The Victors; those by O'Casey were Within the Gates; The Silver Tassie; those by Lorca were The Shoemaker's Prodigious Wife and Blood Wedding.

34. The first figure is taken from Harold Stern, Show Business, 18 January 1949, 5. The second is from John Chapman's citation of Stern in The Best Plays of 1949-50 (New York: Dodd, Mead, and Co., 1950), 382.

35. Programs for The Father (1949) and Earth Spirit (1947), Billy Rose Theatre Collection, Lincoln Center, New York Public Library, New York. Further citations to this collection will refer to it as the Billy Rose Theatre Collection.

36. Programs for Heartbreak House (1950) and The Creditors (1949), Billy Rose Theatre Collection.

37. Information on the Interplayers and the subsequent quotation are from New York Herald Tribune, 10 July 1949, sec. 5, p. 2.

38. Carey Hawkins, Sunday Mirror Magazine, 20 August 1950, 19. Ms. Holland's apparently inept comment concerning Carnegie Hall relates to the Interplayers having obtained a four year lease on the Carnegie Recital Hall the previous summer. Prior to this they had produced at the Provincetown Playhouse.

39. Robert Garland, review of Billy the Kid, New York Journal-American, 4 August 1948.

40. New York Herald Tribune, 30 September 1954.

41. This was a standing statement in the On-Stage programs of the period, several of which are available in the clipping file: "On-Stage," Billy Rose Theatre Collection.

42. John McClain, New York Journal-American, 30 September 1954, 20, was among those praising the effort.

43. George Jean Nathan, New York Journal-American, 16 October 1954.

44. George Jean Nathan, review of The Respectful Prostitute, Theatre Book of the Year, 1949-1950: a Record and an Interpretation, (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1950), 261.

NOTES FOR CHAPTER THREE

1. T. Edward Hambleton, cited in Cue, 5 December 1953, 17.
2. Arthur Gelb, New York Times, 7 November 1954, sec. 2, p. 4.
3. Variety, 12 May 1948, 55.
4. Stevens' influence continued to grow after his arrival in New York in the late 1940s. He had helped to restructured the Playwrights' Company in 1950. (See Wharton, 199-203.) When the Phoenix became nonprofit in 1957, he was elected president of Theatre Incorporated. In 1966 he became the first director of the National Endowment for the Arts.
5. Albert Bermel, "The Phoenix Has Two Heads," 69.
6. Houghton, Entrances and Exits, 227.
7. "Estimated Weekly Running Expense," for The Beaux' Stratagem, 23 January 1959. Phoenix Theatre Archive, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University Library, New Haven. This archive was donated by T. Edward Hambleton in 1985 and is under the curatorship of Patricia Willis. Subsequent citations will use only the name of the archive.
8. Hambleton and Houghton held a yearly lease on the Twelfth Street Theatre. Its remote location precluded any demand for a percentage of the weekly gross from the owner, Julius Raynes' real estate company.
9. New York Herald Tribune, 9 April 1950.
10. Mary B. O'Connell, "The Circle in the Square Theatre and Theodore Mann's Other Productions" (Ph.D diss., New York University, 1970), 51.
11. Although this was not a lavish wage in 1953, it was more than twice the salary offered to actors by the smaller houses. The Equity minimum salary for off-Broadway contracts did not reach \$55 until the mid 1960s.

The figures for the Phoenix are taken from the contracts for Madam Will You Walk?, the Phoenix' first production in 1953 (Phoenix Theatre Archive).

12. \$25,000 was the amount the Playwrights' Company had planned for each of its Broadway productions fifteen years earlier (Wharton, Life Among the Playwrights, 272). During the 1953-54 season Variety reported pre-opening costs of \$60,000 for Tea and Sympathy and \$57,000 for Sabrina Fair (9 December 1953, 69). Although as late as 1958 it was possible to mount a Broadway production for as little as \$40,000 (Look Back in Anger), this was not the norm (Variety, 22 January 1958, 74).

13. The Interplayers figure is from Carey Hawkins, Sunday Mirror Magazine, 20 August 1950, 19. The Proscenium Productions figure is from Bernard Kalb, New York Times, 22 May 1955. sec. 2, p. 3.

14. Variety, 14 April 1948.

15. These figures are from a 27 October 1954 monthly auditor's report and from January 1955 and January 1956 production expense reports (Phoenix Theatre Archive).

16. These figures come from a 7 June 1954 Balance Sheet (Phoenix Theatre Archive).

17. Variety, 2 December 1953, 76.

18. Show Business, 7 December 1953, 8.

19. Variety, 16 May 1951, 60.

20. John McClain, review of Madam, Will You Walk?, New York Journal-American; reprint, New York Theatre Critics' Reviews, 1953, 202.

21. Harold Stern, Show Business, 18 January 1949, 5.

22. Show Business, 6 February 1950, 1.

23. "150 Off-B'way Groups Thriving, Training Thousands of Actors, Directors, and Technicians Yearly," Show Business, 9 November 1953, 3.

24. See Steven Langley, ed., Producers on Producing (New York: Drama Book Specialists, 1976), 185.

25. Gordon Allison, "Their Budget is the Envy of Broadway," New York Herald Tribune, 1 May 1949, sec. 5, pp. 1, 4.

26. These concessions from the unions were offered to both managements in large part because of their locations. New Stages was on Bleecker Street below Washington Square and the Phoenix was several blocks east of Union Square. At such remote sites, neither was likely to offer appreciable competition for Broadway houses.

27. City Center was the third theatre New York theatre to operate under the stock contract.

28. This organization differs considerably from the limited partnership in which the general partner is not required to invest any money but is entitled to 50% of the net profits.

29. Lester Bernstein, "New Stages Row Reaching a Crisis," New York Times, 21 July 1948.

30. Hambleton and Houghton were the sole general partners in this partnership.

31. Morton Gottleib was pleased to have convinced a few "names" such as Ruth Gordon, Garson Kanin, and Gertrude Lawrence to invest in New Stages, but admitted that most of the investors were actors who wanted roles. See Langley, 185.

32. Ward Morehouse New York Sun, February 8, 1949; and George Jean Nathan, Theatre Book of the Year, 1947-1948: a Record and an Interpretation (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1948), 261.

33. The Phoenix, in fact, was not content to settle for limiting its pool of talent to the best of American actors. See Houghton, New York Times, 10 October 1954, sec. 2, p.1, for his complaint that union restrictions precluded the Phoenix' use of English actors.

34. Allison, "Their Budget is the Envy of Broadway," 4.

35. cf. Sam Zolotow, "New Stages Eyes Eva Wolas' Play," New York Times, 15 March 1948.

36. Henry Hewes, "A 'Phoenix' to Frequent," review of Madam, Will You Walk?, by Sidney Howard, Saturday Review, 12 December 1953, 47-8.

37. George Jean Nathan, review of Madam Will You Walk?, New York Journal-American, 27 December 1953.

Nathan's intolerance for the "considerable distance" of thirty-five blocks from Times Square (thirty south and five east--of course, the latter are cross-town blocks and even longer) may seem laughable today. But the Twelfth Street Theatre was considered far from Broadway in 1953, and its remote location became a standing joke in theatre circles. In 1960 when Once Upon a Mattress was playing at the Phoenix, Mary Rodgers commented that she was surprised to find that she could actually get there without a journey "comparable to a one-way Safari through the African veld" (Theatre Arts, July 1960, 21).

38. Angel Street had a run of 1,295 performances when it was produced by Shepard Traube on Broadway in 1941. Volpone was mounted jointly with Theatre Incorporated, which became the funding agency that backed the Phoenix when it turned nonprofit in 1957.

39. The majority of productions in the 1948-49 season arrived at City Center for brief runs after completing long tours. However, this did not remain a consistent pattern, and the following season, City Center returned to its winter stock operation.

40. This season included Charley's Aunt and a remounting of Ferrer's The Shrike, which had been a hit for him in the previous season. It also saw the return of Broadway musical revivals to the repertoire: Oklahoma! and Showboat.

41. Sidney Howard died in a farm accident in August 1939, and the Playwrights' Company attempted to produce Madame, Will You Walk? that fall even though it was unfinished when Howard died. See John Wharton, Life Among the Playwrights, pp. 69-72.

Nathan's insistence that this play was a Broadway vehicle may have been prompted by the reputation that The Playwrights' Company enjoyed during the early 1950s. Just a few weeks prior to Nathan's review, the 2 December 1953 issue of Variety complimented The Playwrights' Company for having the best track record of any recent New York producer: 15 hits in 15 years.

42. Houghton, "Off-Broadway Challenges Broadway," New York Times, 11 November 1956, sec. 6, p. 32. The Phoenix' move to nonprofit status in its fifth season is more fully explored in Chapter Three.

43. Variety, 30 December 1953, 57. Annual Reports for City Center (Billy Rose Theatre Collection) show consistent assets for its theatre program and equally con-

sistent, higher deficits for both its opera and symphony programs.

44. Paul G. Jones, "Contract Changes--Off-Broadway Productions," Equity, September 1954, 5. In this article Jones cites Hambleton and Houghton specifically as being reasonable managers who recognized that their management policies lay outside the available contracts. Equity continued to struggle with the demands of the changing off-Broadway market for several years, and it did not acknowledge the off-Broadway producers and theatre owners as a bargaining unit until it negotiated the first off-Broadway contract in 1961.

45. New York Times, 16 September 1966, 32. The Phoenix program was much closer in form to the later regional theatres than to any of the other off-Broadway theatres of the 1950s, and the Phoenix operated under the LORT contract from 1966 until it moved back to off-Broadway production in 1976.

46. I use legitimate in the same sense that it is used by Variety. A legitimate theatre hires union labor, attracts first-string critics, and advertises its performances in standard theatrical listings such as the New York Times ABCs.

47. William de Lys was a very colorful and somewhat mysterious figure, and newspaper accounts indicate that he purposely kept his past in the shadows when he appeared in New York. One article, Louis Shaeffer, "Tent Show Graduate Heads Village's Theatre de Lys," Brooklyn Daily Eagle, 24 October 1952, claims that at age eighteen de Lys owned his own freak show, a wild man show that featured a friend of de Lys. In describing the show Shaeffer cites de Lys: "You had to have a strong stomach, . . . I never saw the show myself. He used to eat live rats and snakes, and if he couldn't get rats or snakes, he'd eat live chickens. People used to faint. He was a fantastic character. Outside the act, he was a very polished and cultured boy."

Danton Walker, Sunday News (New York), 8 May 1955, sec. 2, p. 6, also attests to de Lys's obscure background. Although he claimed to have been born a de Lys, he also "had told someone that his father had appeared in vaudeville under the name Bill Waters, and people about town swore that they had known him, or someone just like him under several monikers--Lynne Smith, Bill Smith, and plain Bill Schmidt."

48. The information about de Lys's membership plans is from a press release in the clipping file, "Theatres:

U.S.: New York: Lucille Lortel," Billy Rose Theatre Collection.

49. Brooks Atkinson, New York Times, John McClain, New York Journal-American, William Hawkins, New York World-Telegram and the Sun, Richard Watts, Jr., New York Post, all wrote reviews that appeared 29 October 1959. Each of these critics praised de Lys's tasteful renovation of the theatre and attacked the production, which they unanimously proclaimed an embarrassment.

50. John McClain, New York Journal-American, 29 October 1952.

51. New York Times, 29 October 1952.

52. Variety, 25 February 1953.

53. Threepenny first opened there on 10 March 1954 and ran for 95 performances. The following season the de Lys was renting to several managements, presenting five shows brought in by five different producers. Threepenny was then remounted in the fall of 1955 with most of the cast intact from the first production. It ran until December of 1961. Thus the de Lys may have helped establish professional production off-Broadway with its long run of Threepenny. Aside from this it was simply operating as a rental house. The Cherry Lane, the Provincetown Playhouse, the Carnegie Hall Playhouse, and several others were rented out in the same manner.

Lucille Lortel purchased the de Lys in 1954, but she did not gain control of programming in the theatre until 1959 because of a long-term lease arrangement that predated her purchase (New York Times, 7 July 1954).

54. "Off-B'dway Theatres Paying Off as Critics Give Their Approval," Show Business, 2 November 1953, 1.

55. A more substantial discussion of this musical is offered in Chapter Four.

56. The Barbizon-Plaza Theatre contained only 501 seats. Even if Da Silva and Perl could have fitted the production onto its stage, its limited capacity made recoupment of investment impossible within a reasonable time.

57. Bernard Gersten for Rachel Productions to T. Edward Hambleton, 7 April 1954, Phoenix Theatre Archive. Gersten's position with Rachel Productions is not explained in the letter.

Aside from finances, there was another reason for Da Silva and Perl to avoid Broadway. Because of Da Silva's reputation as a Communist sympathizer, it was possible that no Broadway theatre owner would have rented to him anyway. See the Chapter Four for further discussion.

58. They did team up again unsuccessfully in 1957, this time as Banner Productions. The show, Tevya and His Daughters was written by Perl and, like their previous hit, was based on the stories of Sholom Aleichem. The production was capitalized at \$31,000 and lost \$25,000 of that investment. "Big Losses on Big Shows Off-B'dway; Piece, West, and Tevya Drop 100 G," Variety, 18 December 1957, 59.

59. In 1949 five of the managements from off-Broadway had banded together in order to negotiate with Actors' Equity. The union agreed to allow the five managements to hire up to 49% of their actors from the union with token payment being five dollars per week. The union made it clear that this was seen only as a means of alleviating unemployment among its members. Other unions stressed that such a concession should not be interpreted as legitimizing off-Broadway production. Solly Pernick, a spokesman for the stagehands' union, said that the stagehands would support such efforts "as long as they do not compete with the regular legitimate theatre." J. P. Stanley, "Rules for Actors Modified," New York Times, 18 September 1949.

60. Press Release by Off-Broadway Theatre League, 10 February 1955, clipping file, "League of Off-Broadway Producers and Managers," Billy Rose Theatre Collection.

61. New York Times, 19 October 1955. Theodore Mann was the association's president; Lucille Lortel was first vice-president.

62. Garrison P. Sherwood, in Best Plays of 1956-7, ed. Louis Kronenberger (New York: Dodd, Mead, and Company, 1957), 55.

63. Edwin Corley, "Backstage with Viveca Lindfors," offBroadway [sic], December 1958, 15. As its title suggests, this magazine focused exclusively on off-Broadway. It is not catalogued by the Union List of Serials, but it was in circulation for at least six years, 1955-1961. The Billy Rose Theatre Collection has four copies of scattered dates in a clipping file, "Off Broadway Magazine."

64. Playwrights were by far the most reluctant group to accept off-Broadway's legitimacy. The first off-

Broadway productions of new plays by established playwrights came in 1958: Maxwell Anderson's The Golden Six, Tennessee Williams' Garden District, Ben Hecht's Winkelberg. Thornton Wilder also wrote several one-acts for Circle in the Square in the same year.

65. This production was The River Line at the Carnegie Hall Playhouse, 2 January 1957.

66. The term Sideshow for such presentations was first concocted by Norris Houghton. The idea for them was laid out specifically in a 1946 prospectus for Theatre Incorporated. "Theatre Incorporated Appeal for Support, 1946-1949," Billy Rose Theatre Collection.

67. The full seasons for the Phoenix Sideshows prior to the ANTA Matinee Theatre Series were as follows: 1954-55: The Theatre of Angna Enters (a one woman show), The White Devil (featuring the Group 20 players), L'Historie Du Soldat by Igor Stravinsky and N. Richard Nash, Moby Dick (as adapted by Howard Rodman); 1955-56: the American premiere of Marcel Marceau, Geraldine Page in Anna Christie, Thomas Otway's Venice Preserved, Bil and Cora Baird's Marionette Theatre, Characters and Chicanery by Joyce Carol Oates with magic by Fred Keating, Henri De Montherlant's Queen After Death, Stein and Thomson's The Mother of Us All, Arthur Steuer's The Terrible Swift Sword, Elmer Rice's The Adding Machine, and an evening of four premieres by the Ballet Theatre Workshop.

68. As will be seen in Chapters Four and Five, Hambleton reintroduced Sideshows during the 1970s.

69. A full list of productions for each season is provided in the appendix.

70. Leo Lerman, "The Chekhov Orchard," Mademoiselle, May 1956, 130.

71. Examples: Phyllis Love in Easter (1956), Anne Meachum in Hedda Gabler (1960). Ross also managed to land Eva Gabor and Clarence Derwent for Wedekind's Lulu (1959). Aside from this his casts were made up of actors with few professional credits.

72. Even Ross's salary structure was similar to that of the Phoenix. He paid his actors \$50-100 per week. even though the Equity minimum for off-Broadway houses was only \$30 per week.

73. Robert Whitehead had an idea somewhat similar to that of Hambleton and Houghton shortly after the dissolu-

tion of his joint effort with ANTA to mount seasons of limited engagements on Broadway: "I am hoping some day to work out an arrangement under which investors will come in for three plays in a row. Then my limited partners and I might have a moderate failure or two and still make plenty of money together in the end" (New York Times, 31 March 1952, 31).

Of course, Whitehead was still focusing on profit. Hambleton and Houghton's plan for the Phoenix was based on sustenance. If a hit came their way, it could always be moved uptown for an extended run. Any profits would help convince backers to stay with the Phoenix, but the commitment was to continue the limited engagements on Twelfth Street. On this subject, Hambleton said, "I am not sure that we ever admitted to backers that we expected to lose money. Most of them were well acquainted with the commercial theatre and never expected riches to result." T. Edward Hambleton, Maryland, to author, 28 October 1991. A subsequent conversation with Hambleton (7 November 1991) confirmed that those investing in the Phoenix were knowledgeable enough to know that the chosen structure was highly unlikely earn a profit.

74. This show was quite innovative. There was no spoken dialogue, and the entire libretto was written in rhymed couplets. Paris was portrayed as a slick young traveling salesman who lures Helen away from the elderly Menelaus with his suave style and his hot-air balloon.

75. William Hawkins, review of The Golden Apple, "Phoenix Takes a Bow in Golden Apple, New York World-Telegram and Sun, 12 March 1954; reprint, New York Theatre Critics' Reviews, 1953, 346.

76. Exceptions could be cited only at the level of the American Savoyards, which produced a handful of Gilbert and Sullivan operettas each season. But no other theatre of any prominence in the city offered anything but single productions, mounted to run as long as possible.

77. Until Circle in the Square's The Iceman Cometh lasted for 565 performances (1955-6), its production of Summer and Smoke had held the off-Broadway record with 356 performances.

78. These numbers include only those personnel employed in shows produced by the Phoenix itself. Eight more productions were presented at the Phoenix during this time. Though the Phoenix was actively involved in mounting most of these (that is, its role was not merely that of a rental house), other managements were primarily responsible for production.

79. The Phoenix actually offered its first subscriptions in its second season.

80. Garrison P. Sherwood, "Off Broadway," in Best Plays of 1954-55, 52.

81. See Vernon Rice, New York Post, 26 April 1954, 35, and Brooks Atkinson, New York Times. 1 May 1955, sec. 2., p. 1.

82. Hambleton's move to the 74th Street Theatre on the Upper East side of Manhattan is covered in the next chapter.

NOTES FOR CHAPTER FOUR

1. Among the projects that they turned down because of the large house was The Fantasticks. See Stuart W. Little, Off-Broadway, 139.

2. As a result of their close collaboration, it is often difficult to ascertain which of them might have been responsible for a given decision, and any clear cut division of labor is impossible. Houghton asserts that they shared in all decisions (Entrances and Exits, 246), and in conversing with them it is evident that this must have been the case. Often neither of them can remember which one came up with an idea first or how the idea was revised. In referring to decisions made, I give joint credit for all actions that might have involved both Hambleton and Houghton.

3. Hambleton and Houghton began subscription sales during the second season of operation. They had been heartened by their success during the first season in which they had recouped \$100,000 of their costs and had received favorable press. By offering subscriptions they intended to avoid beginning each season with no advance sale (T. Edward Hambleton, interview by author, 26 January 1993).

4. Jack Porter, "A History of the Phoenix Theatre, New York City, 1953 to 1961" (Ph.D. diss., University of Denver, 1962). Porter notes the pattern of losses at the end of each chapter of his dissertation. The losses in the first four seasons were \$31,165, \$151,395, \$97,565, and \$105,815.

5. See Houghton New York Times, 3 June 1956, sec. 2, p. 1 and Entrances and Exits, 259.

6. Like the Phoenix after it, Theatre Incorporated had actually taken on the mantle of nonprofit production by assuming the charter of a previously active enterprise. This was the Chekhov Studio, which had been granted tax-exempt status in 1940. In Entrances and Exits, 259, Houghton explains that when Theatre Incorporated had ceased production in 1950, "its lawyer, Milton Rose, had insisted that it not be dissolved and that a caretaker committee of its board be appointed to ensure that annual

reports would be filed with the IRS. In that way, Rose had said, the charter of Theatre Incorporated would remain alive, and someday when one of us wanted to use it for a purpose consonant with its educational and cultural provisions, its tax-exempt status would be intact." Houghton was president of this caretaker committee in 1957. A copy of the charter for Theatre Incorporated is available at the Billy Rose Theatre Collection.

7. From the beginning of the 1957-58 season, the Phoenix programs noted that the Phoenix Theatre was "a project of Theatre Incorporated." In fact, it was the only project of Theatre Incorporated, and the relationship between the Phoenix and Theatre Incorporated remained the same until the Phoenix folded in 1982. Theatre Incorporated was responsible for financing each season through grants and donations, and Hambleton and Houghton were responsible for the management of the theatre. Upon Houghton's departure, Hambleton took sole responsibility for the operation of the Phoenix.

8. The belief prevailed for years that such operations as the Phoenix could justify their existence only by becoming self-supporting. The Ford Foundation considered the large grants that it offered the early regional theatres to be seed money. The grants were only to last for a few years until the theatres could break even, a goal the foundation assumed to be feasible if the theatre was operating at 75% of its capacity. See Jack Poggi, Theatre in America: The Impact of Economic Forces (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1968), 211-12.

The stance taken by the Ford Foundation was made very clear in 1962. In his article, "Ford Fund Grants Attacked by Papp," New York Times, 10 November 1962, Louis Calta outlined Joseph Papp's case and W. MacNeil Lowry's response. Papp lashed out at Ford's lack of support for the New York Shakespeare Festival, noting the Ford grant given to the Stratford Shakespeare Festival allowed it to pay its trainees \$100 per week, something Papp could not afford. He also complained that Ford was refusing to give money to the New York Festival because of its policy of charging no admission. Lowry responded to Papp in a letter, cited by Calta, explaining that a criterion for selection was "demonstrable ability of the company in question to reach self support from its box-office capacity within a definite period."

Only after William Baumol and William Bowen's Performing Arts--the Economic Dilemma (New York: Twentieth Century Fund, 1966) and years of deficits for almost all the regional theatres did Lowry and others accept the deficit planning that is now standard for nonprofit theatres.

9. Thomas Gale Moore, The Economics of the American Theatre (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1968), 12, states that the Cullmans managed to net around two million dollars from 1938 to 1961 while investing in three hundred productions. Their prowess in picking winners had become something of a legend. Other backers would base decisions about investment on whether the Cullmans were in or out. See Marguerite Cullman, Occupation Angel (New York: W. W. Norton, 1963), 135-40.

10. Telephone interviews by the author, 23 January 1992. Though they did not attribute these phrases to anyone in particular, both Hambleton [the first two] and Houghton [the last] used them to characterize the negative responses they received to their queries for support of the Phoenix as a nonprofit theatre.

11. John Houseman, Front and Center (New York, Simon and Schuster, 1979), 444-6. Houseman, himself, was viewed as suspicious at best. On these same pages he relates how he used his leverage as a director of lucrative films to insure himself against recriminations from M-G-M executives.

12. Houghton, Entrances and Exits, 256.

13. The list of names Houghton was asked about included Da Silva and Robinson. He replied that he knew all the people in question through their employment at the Phoenix and explained that his theatre hired people because of their talent and didn't consider it appropriate to concern itself with the political affiliations of the artists it hired. See Houghton, p. 257-8.

14. Interviews, 23 January 1992.

15. Walter W. Powell, ed., The Nonprofit Sector: A Research Handbook (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1987), 19. Powell notes that Alger Hiss had been president of the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace and that those working for international peace had been lobbying against the isolationists who wanted to keep the United States out of World War II. Powell further observes that in 1952 two congressional committees investigated the extent to which tax exempt organizations had conspired to subvert capitalism and support Marxist socialism.

16. Although rather muddled in presentation, Martin Gottfried's A Theater Divided: The Postwar American Stage

(Boston: Little, Brown, 1967) is the most obvious example. He specifically notes the Phoenix left-wing leanings on pages 161-2. See also Robert Brustein, Making Scenes: A Personal History of the Turbulent Years at Yale, 1966-1979 (New York: Random House, 1981), 165; and Richard Nelson, "Non-profit Theater in America: Where We Are," Performing Arts Journal 7, no. 1 (1983): 87-93.

17. Press Release issued by the Off-Broadway Theatre League, 10 February 1955, Lincoln Center. The stress upon commercial production was the second of five points outlined in the release. Among the more prominent members were Theodore Mann (President) and Lucille Lortel (First Vice President).

18. Gale Thomas Moore, The Economics of the American Theatre (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1986), 101. Tom Fichandler came to Hambleton for advise on how to change Arena into a nonprofit corporation from a partnership (Hambleton interview, 6 June 1991).

19. Houghton, New York Times, 10 October 1954.

20. Norris Houghton, Return Engagement: a Postscript to Moscow Rehearsals (New York: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, 1962), 200.

21. Brustein, Making Scenes, 165.

22. "Phoenix Seeks 750G New Capital For Its 5-Year Repertory Project," Variety, 19 February 1958, 57. The headline ignores the new status of the Phoenix, and the article observes that if the goal of an additional \$750,000 in funds were to be met it "would bring the total investment in the egghead stock operation to about \$1,200,000." The wording and tone of this comment are indicative of the commercial theatre's attitude toward the Phoenix at the time.

23. See p. 69.

24. City Center had been operating as a nonprofit corporation since its founding that was overseen by Mayor LaGuardia in 1943. Striking parallels exist between the formation of the City Center in the 1940s and the formation of Lincoln Center in the 1960s. Both were the result of efforts by politicians (LaGuardia and Rockefeller) who had grandiose schemes. Although it is generally accepted that, as conceived, Lincoln Center was supposed to be the national center for performing arts, it is not widely known that the identical purpose lay behind LaGuardia's

creation of City Center. Playbill, October 1976, noted that LaGuardia intended the project to be a "non-profit corporation which would transform the Mecca Temple into the preeminent performing arts center in the country."

25. Although Joseph Papp was operating the New York Shakespeare Festival nonprofit in 1957, he did not expand to a full season until 1967 when he began production at the Public theatre; furthermore, he, like City Center, enjoyed considerable subvention from the city.

26. Joseph Wexley Zeigler, Regional Theatre: the Revolutionary Stage (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, 1973), 25.

27. See Morton Eustis, B'way, Inc.! Theatre as Business (New York: Dodd, Mead and Company, 1934), 18-23.

28. Again, I do not include consideration of the New York Shakespeare Festival, which continued as a summer festival with two productions annually. Also, David Merrick founded the David Merrick Arts Foundation in 1959 in order to fund performing arts scholarships at Brandeis and Catholic Universities. That year Merrick provided partial backing for Gypsy through the foundation (New York Times, 15 April 1960). The following year, Merrick decided to use the foundation to back productions he was interested in importing but which had less chance of returning their investments than his more lucrative musicals. The first such production was Arturo Ui (1960). Later productions included John Osborne's Luther (1963), Inadmissible Evidence (1965), a revival of The Milktrain Doesn't Stop Here Anymore (1964), Marat/Sade (1966), and Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead (1967).

29. See Murray Schumach, New York Times, 19 October 1958, sec. 10, p. 3; Lewis Funke, "A Phoenix with Personality," Theatre Arts, January 1960, 72; and Norris Houghton, Return Engagement: A Postscript to Moscow Rehearsals (New York: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, 1962), 70.

30. Cited by John Keating, "'New Man' of the Arts: Stuart Vaughan Rises With a Scholarly Background," New York Times, 21 May 1961, sec. 6, p. 3.

31. Stuart Vaughan, A Possible Theatre: the Experiences of a Pioneer Director in America's Resident Theatre (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1969), 90. Vaughan notes that the Phoenix was not paying Broadway scale to its actors, but he does not compare the pay offered by the Phoenix to that offered by other off-Broadway managements.

32. Arthur Gelb, "Little Theatres Fighting Equity," New York Times, 31 March 1958, 19, lists the Broadway minimum as \$100 and the off-Broadway minimum as \$40. The one hundred dollar salary for the Phoenix does not include chorus members for musicals who made \$55 per week, twice the standard off-Broadway earnings (Contracts for the 1954 production of The Golden Apple, Phoenix Theatre Archive). Even extras were paid \$40 per week (Contracts for the 1957 production of Saint Joan, Phoenix Theatre Archive).

Hambleton and Houghton wished to offer an alternative theatre that would not dictate a certain life-style to those employed. The Phoenix could not offer the financial gains available on Broadway or in Hollywood, but it did not ask that the actor seek other employment to make a living.

33. Norris Houghton, New York Times, 3 June 1956, sec. 2, p. 1.

34. Theatre Incorporated Board minutes from June and July 1959 (Phoenix Theatre Archive) show that the Ford Foundation expressed little interest in Hambleton's program. Hambleton proceeded without support from Ford, and the grant was finally offered in December, 1959, three months into the season. The relationship between the Phoenix and the Ford Foundation is discussed more fully in Chapter Five. See pp. 144, 153, and 171-173.

35. Ford Foundation Annual Report, 1960, 48.

36. Cited in Zeigler, 60.

37. Little, Off-Broadway, 148. This was the first time that the Phoenix would chafe under the the restrictions created by subsidizing institutions that dictated uniformity among the theatres receiving funds. See page 153 for a discussion of the dilemma that faced the APA-Phoenix ten years later.

38. Stewart Vaughan, telephone interview by author, Tape recording, 18 August 1991.

39. Vaughan, A Possible Theatre, 104.

40. Although he does not acknowledge the bias, Vaughan's observations are written from a perspective gained during the years after he left the Phoenix. He faults Hambleton and Houghton for lack of commitment to the task of establishing a theatre with an identity, to announcing seasons in advance, and to nurturing a sub-

scription audience that would support their program, but in doing so he betrays a misconception of the environment in which the Phoenix operated in 1958 when he joined Hambleton and Houghton. Many of the points he makes in his book are far more valid in terms of the late 1960s than of the late 1950s.

41. Vaughan, A Possible Theatre, 102.

42. Henry Sherek to Hambleton, 27 March 1956, Phoenix Theatre Archive.

43. See Roy S. Waldau, Vintage Years of the Theatre Guild, 1928-1939 (Cleveland: Case Western Reserve, 1972), 16.

44. The Cambridge Drama Festival was a summer theatre in Boston, and the production of Saint Joan had been directed by Albert Marre. To secure the deal, Hambleton and Houghton had to negotiate with the festival, with Stevens, and with McKenna. As inducement, the Phoenix provided a loan of \$15,000 to the Cambridge Festival that helped underwrite the mounting costs for Saint Joan and other festival productions. (Allen Hunt, Cambridge, Massachusetts to Hambleton and Houghton, 27 June 1956, Phoenix Theatre Archive.)

Procurement of a star of McKenna's stature was a key ingredient in arranging the production, but even this did not assure success. After Roger Stevens had secured the rights for a Broadway production, Brooks Atkinson wrote an unfavorable review of the London production. As a result, Stevens decided against bringing the production directly to Broadway and reached an agreement with Hambleton that made Stevens a co-producer for the Phoenix production of Saint Joan (T. Edward Hambleton to author, 9 March 1993).

45. Letters from Hambleton to all of the above in spring and summer of 1956, Phoenix Theater Archive.

46. Many critics complained of the play's lack of theatricality. Among them were Brooks Atkinson, New York Times; Frank Aston, New York World-Telegram; John McClain, New York Journal American; Richard Watts, New York Post. All these reviews appeared 21 October 1958.

47. Walter Kerr, New York Herald Tribune, 21 October 1958. Houghton offers a reaction to Kerr's review in Entrances and Exits (265), "Walter meant well; nonetheless, he sent a message: a play that performs a 'public service,' is 'earnest' and a 'difficult piece of work,' is nothing your average New York theatregoer wants to spend

an evening with. Leave that to the universities and the Germans."

48. Minutes of Theatre Incorporated Board Meeting, 18 February 1958, Phoenix Theatre Archive. The 26 May 1958 minutes show that only \$57,000 of the planned \$150,000 had come in.

49. Stevens and Dowling underwrote the cost of the production (Minutes of Theatre Incorporated Board Meeting, 13 January 1959, Phoenix Theatre Archive).

50. The sole detractor was Brooks Atkinson of the New York Times.

51. Porter, "A History of the Phoenix," 133.

52. Vaughan, A Possible Theatre, 104.

53. The share that Hambleton and Houghton would have received as general partners went to Theatre Incorporated (Minutes of Theatre Incorporated Board Meeting, 3 March 1959, Phoenix Theatre Archive).

54. Little, Off-Broadway, 144.

55. The production eventually earned a net profit for its backers of 5% (Variety, 29 March 1961).

56. Details concerning this meeting are from the the minutes in the Phoenix Theatre Archive.

57. Stern was a producer and had co-produced Ballet Ballads with Hambleton in 1947.

58. Previous campaigns had relied solely upon direct mailings and large advertisements in the fall. This time Hambleton was expanding these efforts considerably. The minutes read: "Mr. Hambleton said that 400 'friends of the Phoenix' were going to be organized to campaign for subscriptions; in addition the Phoenix was going to use not only its own list of 24,000 names, but was also going to use a bought list of 100,000 names; some display ads would be taken; and finally there would be a large 'get-together' at the Phoenix Theatre toward the end of April."

59. Arthur Gelb, New York Times, 5 and 21 May 1959. Both of these grants offered \$25,000 a year for three years.

Of course, the Phoenix did not invent the subscription audience, but it began subscription ticket sales in 1954

and stands as an exception to Danny Newman's claim that nonprofit theatres operated without subscription audiences through the 1950s. See Danny Newman, Subscribe Now! Building Arts Audiences Through Dynamic Subscription Promotion (New York: Theatre Communications Group, 1977; repr., 1983), 4.

60. Minutes of Theatre Incorporated Board Meeting, 15 October 1959, Phoenix Theatre Archive.

61. Houghton discusses his multiple reasons for leaving the Phoenix in Entrances and Exits, 267-70. He notes that lack of pay was among those reasons. As managers he and Hambleton were each to receive a yearly salary of \$10,000, but they felt they could not justify the salaries in the face of ongoing deficits. As a compromise, they paid themselves half salaries. Houghton, lacking independent wealth, could not continue. One reason that the Phoenix was able to survive in 1959 was that Hambleton did not need to draw a salary. Hambleton's wealth prompted charges of dilettantism (See Vaughan, A Possible Theatre, 104 and Little, Off-Broadway, 143), and it continued to create trouble for Hambleton even as it allowed him to keep the Phoenix alive. See p. 137.

62. Seventeen company members appeared in at least three of the productions during the season. Among them were Gerry Jedd, Patricia Falkenhain, Fritz Weaver, Edwin Sherin, John Heffernan, Donald Madden, Nan Martin, and Eric Berry.

63. The subscriptions provided roughly \$175,000 (Porter, 137). With the two grants, pre-season income was \$225,000.

64. Jim O'Connor, "Phoenix Gets Grants," New York Journal-American, 1 December 1959. The Ford Foundation had shown little interest in the project in the spring and summer months.

65. Since Once Upon a Mattress was still running at the Twelfth Street Theatre, The Great God Brown played at the Coronet Theatre, a Broadway house. Hambleton then moved Mattress to Broadway, reclaiming Twelfth Street for the resident company production of Lysistrata.

Walter Kerr, Robert Coleman, John McClain, Frank Aston, Brooks Atkinson, John Chapman, and Richard Watts, Jr. all considered Gascon's Lysistrata tasteless, and such harsh reaction from the press prompted Hambleton to close this production and substitute Pictures in the Hallway, which finished the six-week run planned for Lysistrata.

Gascon had directed two French language productions for Le Théâtre de Nouveau Monde--Le Malade Imaginaire and a program of three one acts--which had been presented as Sideshows at the Phoenix in May 1958.

66. Hambleton had similar trouble with Ellis Rabb ten years later. See p. 150

67. Hambleton, interview by author, Tape recording, New York City, 6 June 1991.

68. Vaughan, A Possible Theatre, 110. Ten years later, when onstage nudity as wide-spread and O, Calcutta was playing on Broadway, this production would have probably caused no uproar. Pictures of the production in the Billy Rose Theatre Collection and Phoenix Theatre Archive show the costume and set design to be flat and cartooned. Both sexes wore body stockings, pasties, and fig leaves. Vaughan describes some of the blocking in A Possible Theatre (110), writing, "My most vivid memory is of the men's chorus, clad in flesh-colored long johns, with the absurd rubber caps making all of them bullet-headed. They had divested themselves of their outer garments and were all leaping madly about a large phallus-shaped battering ram which was being shoved into the gate of the women's quarters. The preview audiences were either aghast or swamped with hysterical giggles."

69. This situation is discussed further in Chapter Five's examination of repertory. See p. 144.

70. Vaughan, A Possible Theatre, 135.

71. Minutes of Theatre Incorporated Board Meeting, 2 March 1961, Phoenix Theatre Archive.

72. David Percy Edgecombe's unpublished dissertation, "Educational Programs of Four North American Shakespeare Festivals: Stratford Shakespeare Festival, The New Jersey Shakespeare Festival, The Folger Theatre, and the Oregon Shakespeare Festival," (Kent State, 1986) is the only attempt to assess such programs. Although Edgecombe provides clear descriptions of programs offered by the theatres listed in his title, his efforts are of limited use here because he mentions few dates and because he covers educational projects such as college seminars taught by artistic staff that are unrelated to the programs offered by the Phoenix. Aside from Edgecombe's dissertation, the only accounts of educational programs by professional theatres are incidental descriptions in newspapers, magazines, and journals. An added barrier to

accurate assessment of these early programs is the lack of primary material. Later, when funding became available, the funding source (whether a foundation or the government) requested documentation, but in the 1950s, when the Phoenix began reaching out to students, no such stipulations were in place. As a result, scant documentation is available.

73. Richard Kirschner, interview by author, Tape recording, New York, NY, 29 August 1991. The reference to Hambleton as T. is far from unique. Nearly everyone who has worked with him calls him T.

74. The phrase conscious eclecticism is Houghton's: see Lewis Funke, New York Times, 29 April 1956. Among the critics who argued that the Phoenix needed a more focused perspective were George Jean Nathan, Journal-American, 27 December 1953; Eric Bentley, New Republic, 23 April 1956; Albert Bermel, "The Phoenix Has Two Heads, Tulane Drama Review 4, no. 1, (September 1959); Murray Schumach, "The Phoenix Rises," New York Times, 19 October 1958; and Brooks Atkinson, New York Times, 3 May 1959.

75. Hambleton and Houghton, New York Times, 13 February 1955, sec. 2, p. 3.

76. Phoenix box office records of the period make no mention of student ticket sales.

77. The 16 March 1961 Playbill for Hamlet, made the following claim: "Over 100,000 students have attended Phoenix productions on student discount tickets. This record far outdistances the 27,000 tickets distributed by other theatrical organizations through the Board of Education this year."

78. Jerry [Jerome Max] to Ben [Kornzweig], Office memo, ca. 1959, Billy Rose Theatre Collection. In this program, the theatre gave teachers information packets to be used as study guides and brought the teachers to the theatre for Saturday seminars that provided background information on Phoenix productions. Jerry Max, then director of education of the Phoenix, remembered that the teachers involved had been offered a counter-productive incentive by school administrators. Those taking part were earning graduate credits that would enhance prospects for tenure. Despite active interest by some of the teachers involved, Max remembered teachers who sat in the auditorium of the Twelfth Street Theatre marking papers during the seminar sessions. (29 July 1991 interview.)

79. One of the weaknesses of the Phoenix education program was its inability to settle on a recognizable name. Jerome Max remembers that this program was originally called Theatre-at-the-Schools, but that when he entitled one of the offerings of the tour "The Portable Phoenix" the name caught on (Interview by author, Tape recording, New York City, 29 August 1991).

Schools tended to refer to the entire program by this name even though the letterhead still read "Theatre-at-the-Schools." In the three seasons following its 1960 debut, the program was variously referred to as the "Living Theatre," "Theatre-in-the-Schools", and "Portable Phoenix." "Portable Phoenix" was again used in the late 1960s for a similar project that featured members of the APA-Phoenix repertory. I refer to the 1960-62 program as Theatre-at-the-Schools throughout to avoid confusion.

80. Provision for the education program is prominent in the 1957 proposal adopted by Theatre Incorporated for a permanent repertory company at the Phoenix (Billy Rose Theatre Collection).

81. The production included excerpts from the first acts of The Taming of the Shrew, and Caesar and Cleopatra, and nearly all of Chekhov's one act, "The Boor." The ten-dollar fee was raised to twenty-five dollars the following year.

82. Although promotional material used to solicit funds for the Theatre-at-the-Schools program suggests that foundations and corporations had contributed to the cause, I have not been able to find any records of funding sources for the project. Neither Hambleton nor Jerome Max, the education director at the time, remembers any contributions from foundations or corporations.

83. Zeigler, Regional Theatre, 173.

84. Tours of Hamlet/Androcles and the Lion (1961) and The Matchmaker (1962) were subsidized by the New York State Council on the Arts. A more detailed discussion of these efforts appears below.

85. Norman Nadel, New York World-Telegram and Sun, 28 March 1962, 30. In this article Nadel notes that "the low booking cost (\$25 in New York City schools, \$50 for those outside the city) raises only about \$8000 of a \$30,000 seasonal operating cost. The Phoenix scrapes together the rest, but would welcome help from other groups, such as the League of New York Theaters or perhaps the Board of Education itself."

86. This figure is from the New York Times, 4 October 1960, 45. Each of the touring programs played just over 100 performances in its first year.

87. Box office receipts show that Abe Lincoln in Illinois grossed \$46,528 during its run, enough to recoup over \$16,000 in renovations as well as the costs for mounting and operating the production. Net profit was \$811, Phoenix Theatre Archive, Beinecke.

Figures from the Phoenix box office were the only statistics of the time to suggest that a large enough student audience existed to support this project.

88. Hambleton to subscribers, 25 March 1963. At the time, Hambleton planned to offer the Anderson season to subscribers since Arthur Kopit's Oh, Dad, Poor, Dad, Momma's Hung You in the Closet and I'm Feeling So Sad, was enjoying the first long run of the Phoenix' history at 74th Street.

89. Even Phoenix subscribers were restricted to the public performances on weekends.

90. Harold Stern, "Theater Notes," New York Standard, 17 January 1963.

91. Unless otherwise indicated, all details concerning the formation of the student audience matinees at Stratford are from my interview with Richard Kirschner, 29 August 1991.

92. American Shakespeare Festival subscription brochure, 1959. This brochure for the general public was published well after the student season had been announced in February.

93. Kirschner interview, 29 August 1991.

94. During the first season student audiences saw a production of A Midsummer Night's Dream and a few previews of Hamlet (John Houseman, Final Dress (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1983), 130).

95. Ibid.

96. Balance Sheet, 14 April 1963, Phoenix Theatre Archive.

97. Kirschner remembered that the production was "without a laugh for the first forty-five minutes."

98. The Phoenix opened Madame, Will You Walk? in the midst of a newspaper strike in 1953.

99. Subscribers were to attend Oh, Dad at the 74th Street Theatre, all four Anderson Plays, and a sixth play to be announced in the spring when Hambleton planned to close Oh, Dad.

100. Richard Kirschner noted that the Anderson Theatre Project was not intended to be a deficit operation. Hambleton planned to achieve solvency by collecting half the project's income during the three public performances on the weekend. Although the student program relied upon brochures distributed to schools for publicity, the newspaper strike dealt a serious blow to publicity for these public performances (Kirschner interview).

101. "The Stratford Festival Story, 1953-1961." This brochure, published yearly by the Canadian Festival, provides a brief overview of developments through previous seasons.

102. Subsequent issues of "The Stratford Festival Story" track the slow growth of the student audience program. In the second year a single evening performance was added. In 1960 the evening performances were dropped and a second week of matinees were added. In 1963, the year of the Anderson Theatre Project, the Festival still offered only two weeks of matinees but was giving students a choice of two productions. By 1973 the Festival offered one week in the spring and six in the fall, a schedule similar to the one the Festival observes today.

Thus the Canadian Festival's student audience program grew cautiously to a size comparable to that of the Stratford/Anderson program, but it cannot be considered a precursor to Kirschner's efforts in Connecticut.

103. Unmarked newspaper clipping, probably from New Orleans, ca. 1967, clipping file: "Repertory Theatre of New Orleans," Billy Rose Theatre Collection. The federal agencies stipulated that the programs reach every student.

104. Trinity Square Repertory was the best-established theatre of the three. Inner City Repertory was created for the project and Repertory Theatre of New Orleans had been in existence only one year.

105. Trinity Square Theatre, Project Discover promotional brochure, 1980, p. 15, Billy Rose Theatre Collection.

106. The Belasco Project of the 1986-87 season, which presented As You Like It, Romeo and Juliet, and Macbeth for a total of 174 performances from November 1986 through May 1987, shares certain traits with the Anderson Theatre Project. Like Hambleton's plan, the Belasco Project was intended to reach a vast high school audience. Papp had managed to secure the Belasco Theatre rent free and played eight performances a week with weekday curtains at 10:00 and 1:30 and a Sunday matinee at 3:00. Attendance was free and was restricted to high school students.

Unlike Hambleton, Papp isolated the Belasco Project from the rest of the the Public Theatre's season. The general public, the Public Theatre's subscribers, and the critics were not invited to attend the Belasco season. Although the programs in San Francisco, New Orleans, and Providence may have been inspired by the Anderson Theatre Project, Papp's Belasco Project clearly was not.

Samuel J. Freedman, "Students to Meet the Bard on Broadway," New York Times, 6 January 1986, sec. c, p. 11, states that this project grew out of Papp's interest in interracial casting. Papp had been impressed by the 1979 interracial production of Antony and Cleopatra directed by Estelle Parsons, and he intended the interracial casting of the Belasco Project to reflect the interracial audience that the project would attract from the public schools.

107. The Portable Phoenix offered a variety of shows, usually including a medley of scenes from classic plays. In this manner it was similar to the earlier Theatre-at-the-Schools project. But the most popular offering in the repertoire was an original satirical revue, New York and Who to Blame It On, which traced the history of the city through song and dance. This production played two summers, 1968 and 1969.

108. The only information available on this program is an unsigned evaluation apparently done for the New York City Board of Education: "Evaluation Study of the New Phoenix Theater Program for Schools," 20 August 1971, Phoenix Theatre Archive. The report claims to be unbiased and states that the problems that developed "may not be related to this program, but rather may be endemic to the situation that results from placing artists in schools," but it is written in a harshly critical tone and suggests several ulterior motives that might be attributed to the Phoenix management for having instituted the program. Among these: "(1) They needed to get more money for other programs. (2) They saw the program as an excellent way to enhance their reputation as innovators, also as concerned with deprived groups. (3) They hoped to stir things up in the schools" (p. 28).

109. The "Evaluation Study of the New Phoenix Theatre Program for Shools," covers various objections that arose concerning the program, but a problem that prevailed throughout all six of the schools was that the faculty felt invaded by the program. Each director was placed through a screening process with the principal of the school. Since there was no faculty representation in the selection process, faculty tended to view the appointment with suspicion. They saw the director as a maverick foisted upon them by the administration. Furthermore, each of the directors was young and tended to identify more with the students than the faculty. Of course, students who considered themselves at odds with the faculty gravitated toward the director and his/her program, further exacerbating the problem.

110. Webster created this touring troupe out of the remnants of the American Repertory Theatre. See Margaret Webster, Don't Put Your Daughter on the Stage (Alfred A. Knopf: New York, 1972), 175-98.

111. Although Baumol and Bowen (p. 549) note appropriations of \$50,000 for NYSCA as early as 1958-59, the Council's annual reports list 1961 as its first year with appropriations of \$450,000.

112. These and other details of the Hamlet/Androcles tour are taken from Omar K. Lerman, "Report on the Phoenix Theatre Tour for the New York State Council on the Arts, October, 2 - November 4, 1961," Billy Rose Theatre Collection. This report could hardly be considered unbiased since Lerman was associate managing director of the Phoenix at the time, but there is no reason to question the itinerary or figures that he provides.

113. Lerman, 5.

114. The \$95,000 figure is taken from the NYSCA Annual Report, 1961, p. 39. It has been recorded as \$90,000 in other NYSCA reports and variously reported in newspapers as \$80,000, and \$85,000. The figure for The Matchmaker is from the NYSCA Annual Report, 1960-64, p. 41.

115. Dick Netzer, The Subsidized Muse: Public Support of the Arts in the United States (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1978.), 80.

116. New York State Council on the Arts Annual Report, 1960-1970.

117. Stuart W. Little, After the FACT, Conflict and Consensus: A Report on the First American Congress of Theatre (New York: Arno, 1975), 82; and Robert Brustein, Critical Moments: Reflections on Theatre and Society, 1973-79 (New York, Random House, 1980), 50.

NOTES FOR CHAPTER FIVE

1. This theatre, located at 335 E. 74th Street, had been given the uninspired name, 74th Street Theatre. Hambleton renamed it the Phoenix Theatre as he had the Twelfth Street Theatre eight years earlier. For clarity, I will refer to it by its original name.

2. Michael Feingold, "The Phoenix Theatre, 1953-82," Village Voice, 21 December 1982, 117.

3. In 1970, Hobe Morrison, "Rabb Will Rebuild APA," (Possaic, NJ) Herald News, 5 January 1970, 22, wrote, "The Phoenix . . . is really a sort of corporate entity for T. Edward Hambleton." Earlier Stuart Vaughan had suggested that the Phoenix ran on Hambleton's supply of ready cash (Vaughan, 101) and in 1960, Robert Brustein, though not specifically claiming the Phoenix open to Hambleton's whim, claimed the Phoenix sole purpose was to survive, that is served "no purpose higher than its own existence" (Seasons of Discontent: Dramatic Opinions, 1959-65 (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1965), 221).

4. In the first seasons, his personal investment was relatively small. For example, the Limited Partnership Agreement, 8 February 1954, Phoenix Theatre Archive, lists Roger L. Stevens' \$25,000 as the largest investment. Hambleton's share in the same year was \$2,500.

5. Minutes of Theatre Incorporated Board Meeting, 3 March 1959 and 13 January 1959, Phoenix Theatre Archive. See p. 96 and Chapter Four, n. 49.

6. Wharton, Life Among the Playwrights, 159.

The original eighteenth century sense of the term dilettante is clearly applicable to Hambleton in that he pursued theatre for his love of it rather than for monetary gain. The records in the Phoenix Theatre Archive show that Hambleton never received a salary as manager of the Phoenix. But the later, disparaging sense of dilettante that stresses lack of serious intent is absurd when applied to Hambleton, who produced actively in New York from 1936 to 1982. Cf. Oxford English Dictionary, s.v. "dilettante."

7. See Little, Off-Broadway, 143.

The accusation of dilettantism has been supported by Stuart Vaughan and Ellis Rabb. In A Possible Theatre, Vaughan openly portrays Hambleton as a whimsical dilettante, and Rabb, though he never made a public pronounce-

ment, considered Hambleton a wealthy amateur (Houseman, Final Dress, 317).

Rabb's attitude is also evident throughout his correspondence with Hambleton. Specifically, in letters of 29 July 1966 and 17 March 1968, Rabb offers explanations of the artistic process to Hambleton. Furthermore, during the 3 March 1969 APA company meeting when the dissolution of the APA-Phoenix was discussed, Rabb was clearly of the opinion that Hambleton did not understand artistic planning. (Correspondence and meeting minutes are available in the Phoenix Theatre Archive.)

8. Houghton, New York Times, 24 November 1963, sec. 2, p. 1.

9. Little, Off-Broadway: the Prophetic Theatre, 137.

10. Houghton, Entrances and Exits, 263.

11. Minutes from the Theatre Incorporated Board meetings from 1957 to 1983, Phoenix Theatre Archive, show that, occasional differences of opinion with other board members notwithstanding, Hambleton decided the course of the Phoenix. Although nothing in the minutes directly connects his past contributions to his power, there is no reason to doubt that there was a correlation.

12. The "New York" market I refer to here is the Broadway and the newly professional (regional detractors would say commercial) off-Broadway market. I use regional and resident as distinct terms. I refer to nonprofit professional theatres located outside the immediate New York City area as regional theatres. Resident theatres are those theatres, regardless of location, that attempt to retain a significant number of their actors for a minimum of one season.

Without doubt, presenting the division between New York and regional theatres in such distinct terms is an oversimplification. Many who were working in the regional theatres had worked in New York previously. Still, the battle lines were drawn as clearly as I have presented them. Regional managers often made disparaging remarks about the New York market. For example, Herbert Blau wrote, "In New York, there is no question of minimal relations between the institution of theater and the art of theater" (The Impossible Theatre: a Manifesto (New York: Macmillan, 1964), 33); and Zelda Fichandler said, "New York exists not to make theatre necessarily, but to make profits" (Steven Langley, Producers on Producing (New York: Drama Book Specialists, 1976), 93).

One published response to regional theatre bias is Harold Prince, "Waning Respect: Showman Decries Tendency

to Equate Broadway with Commercialism," New York Times, 2 August 1964, sec. 2, p. 1. Prince objected to the division in which the regional theatres portrayed themselves as pristine arts organizations and Broadway producers as filthy money grubbers.

13. Guthrie himself was an establishment figure who started his first season by using a company that sported long lists of commercial credits. Among those he hired for the first season were Hume Cronyn and Jessica Tandy, the same team that Hambleton and Houghton had used to launch the Phoenix ten years earlier.

14. See Herbert Blau, The Impossible Theater: a Manifesto (New York: MacMillan, 1964); and Robert Brustein, Making Scenes: a Personal History of the Turbulent Years at Yale, 1966-1979 (New York: Random House, 1981). Of course, Blau and Irving's decision to move most of their troupe to New York a few years later brought the division into sharper focus. This debacle is discussed later in the chapter.

15. Hume Cronyn, Best Plays of 1965-66, 59-60. Cronyn wrote the comment on regional theatre for this edition of Best Plays.

16. See Stuart Little, Off-Broadway, 143.

17. The APA-Phoenix operated on Broadway at the Lyceum Theatre beginning in 1966. It had previously operated off-Broadway during the 1963-64 and 1964-65 seasons.

18. William Hawkins, "Phoenix Players Approach a Repertory," New York World-Telegram and Sun, 14 December 1953.

19. "Proposal by Theatre Incorporated for a Permanent Repertory Company at the Phoenix Theatre," ca. 1957, Billy Rose Collection. This sentiment echoes Le Gallienne's appeal to the public to support her American Repertory Theatre in an open letter to the public that functioned as a subscription flyer, ca. 1946, Billy Rose Collection.

20. Edgar B. Young, Lincoln Center, the Building of an Institution (New York: New York University Press, 1980), 56-7.

21. Oliver M. Saylor, "Repertory Now!" Theatre Arts 42, no. 6, (June 1958): 22-24; and Eva Le Gallienne, "Repertory . . . When?" Theatre Arts 42, no. 9 (September 1958): 14-16.

22. The fact of yearly deficits was first acknowledged by the Board of Theatre Incorporated in 1958 (Minutes of Theatre Incorporated Board Meeting, 24 April 1958, Phoenix Theatre Archive). See Chapter Four, n. 8.

23. Tyrone Guthrie, A Life in the Theatre (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1959), 236. Stuart Vaughan notes that Hambleton and Houghton offered Guthrie the position of artistic director but that he turned them down, suggesting that they hire a young American director (A Possible Theatre, 89).

24. Houseman, Final Dress, 17.

25. Minutes of Theatre Incorporated Board Meeting, 7 March 1957, Phoenix Theatre Archive.

26. Minutes of Theatre Incorporated Board Meeting, 3 June 1957, Phoenix Theatre Archive.

27. John Wharton memorandum to Special [Planning] Committee of the Board of Theatre Incorporated, 3 January 1961, Phoenix Theatre Archive. Wharton was the Chairman of the Theatre Incorporated Board of Directors.

28. T. Edward Hambleton, Unpublished article, 10 November 1969, 3-4, Billy Rose Collection. Hambleton's claim that he "never agreed" that there was room for only one repertory theatre seems to be rosy hindsight. Minutes from board meetings during 1960, especially 27 July and 14 December 1960, give ample proof that no one at the meetings felt repertory was feasible in the shadow of Lincoln Center (Phoenix Theatre Archive).

29. T. Edward Hambleton, "The Need for Repertory," New York Times, 17 July 1961, sec. 2, p. 1.

30. Stuart Vaughan felt that the Phoenix actually had two audiences: its preview audience and its subscribers. He described the preview audience as much younger and typical of the off-Broadway audiences of the period. The subscription audiences were older, more affluent, and more sedate (A Possible Theatre, 99-100).

31. That fall Tyrone Guthrie opened the Minnesota Theatre Company (later called the Guthrie), and Stuart Vaughan opened the Seattle Repertory Theatre. Both Guthrie and Vaughan had worked at the Phoenix, and both joined the decentralization crusade.

32. The Lincoln Center project was under such severe scrutiny by critics, politicians, and artists that it had very little chance of pleasing anyone. The debacle that ensued was followed at the time by the popular press and by such scholarly journals as Richard Schechner's Tulane Drama Review. It has since been analyzed by several people. See Richard Schechner, "Blau and Irving at Lincoln Center: II," TDR 11, no. 1 (Fall 1967): 22; Edgar B. Young, Lincoln Center, the Building of an Institution (New York: New York University Press, 1980), 243-46; Robert Brustein, Seasons of Discontent, 18-19; Ralph G. Martin, Lincoln Center for the Performing Arts (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1971), 92; and Martin Gottfried, "What shall it profit a theatre if . . . ?" New York Times, 23 August 1970, sec. 2, p. 1.

33. Rabb had played a small role in The Duchess of Malfi and Sir Andrew Melvil in Mary Stuart.

34. A thorough history of the APA is offered in Robert Frank Falk, "A Critical Analysis of the History and Development of the Association of Producing Artists (APA) and the Phoenix Theatre (APA-Phoenix), 1960-1969," (Ph.D. diss., Wayne State University, 1970).

35. Hambleton to Rabb, 11 November 1964, Phoenix Theatre Archive.

36. This memo is lost, but Hambleton refers to its contents in the 11 November letter.

Despite this encouragement, one prominent stumbling block that continued to haunt the APA-Phoenix was Rabb's reluctance to commit himself and the troupe to a full acceptance of the merger that Hambleton was seeking. Rabb tended to have much the same attitude toward Hambleton that Stuart Vaughan had exhibited earlier. In Final Dress, 317, Houseman notes that "Hambleton . . . was steady as a rock but too modest and diffident in creative matters to transcend the image that Ellis tended to emphasize--of a wealthy, tenacious, benevolent amateur." See n. 7.

37. Hambleton to Rabb, 13 December 1965, Phoenix Theatre Archive. A note in Hambleton's handwriting on this letter says, "Read by Ellis but not delivered to him." The italicized sections are crossed out, and the boldfaced phrase in brackets is handwritten, again by Hambleton. These alterations soften the tone of the letter and demonstrate the difficulty that Hambleton and Rabb had with negotiating an agreement that both could support.

38. Ellis Rabb, telephone interview by author, 10 October 1992.

39. Albert Bermel, "The Phoenix Has Two Heads," Tulane Drama Review 4, no.1 (September 1959): 83. Of course, the Phoenix could have elected to rehearse longer at full pay, but it was already operating at a loss.

40. Hambleton made no attempt to hide his assumption of a deficit when he applied for the grant. Despite the Ford Foundation's insistence that resident theatres should eventually be self-supporting, Hambleton's 1965 proposal to the Foundation showed a planned deficit of \$625,455 over a five year period. Hambleton had also written to MacNeil Lowry on 8 February 1965 (Phoenix Theatre Archive), openly asserting that there would always be a deficit. The application to Ford stipulated that "the Foundation would be protected each year by the agreement stating that the next annual grant would not be forthcoming until any deficit for the current year had been extinguished" (Hambleton to Rabb, 23 December 1965, Phoenix Theatre Archive.)

41. The grant was to total \$900,000 over three years and was to be matched by \$1,350,000 from other sources (Minutes of Theatre Incorporated Board Meeting, 7 March 1969, Phoenix Theatre Archive).

42. A letter from Hambleton to Theatre Incorporated, 22 April 1966, Phoenix Theatre Archive, indicates that the guarantees were \$130,000 at Ann Arbor and \$136,500 in Los Angeles.

43. Minutes of Theatre Incorporated Board Meeting, 19 May 1967, Phoenix Theatre Archive, state that the largest single item of expense was the "unavoidable deficit arising from operations in New York City."

44. Throughout the association, the APA and the Phoenix maintained separate offices at the Lyceum. Rabb's offices were in the rear and Hambleton's in the front. See Falk, "Analysis and History of the APA," 236.

45. Letter of Agreement between Theatre Incorporated and APA, 1966, Phoenix Theatre Archive.

46. (San Francisco) Morning Telegraph, 18 April 1970.

47. Rabb to Hambleton, 10 October 1968, Phoenix Theatre Archive.

48. Rabb expressed his desire to appeal to a "popular audience" in a 16 December 1964 memo to Hambleton (Phoenix Theatre Archive), and he still feels that it would have been possible to work without a large subscription audience. In a 10 October 1992 telephone interview with the author, he explained that the ideal plan would be to limit subscription audiences to the first few weeks of the season while the company was settling into the repertory. After this breaking-in period, unencumbered by subscription, the management would then announce a performance schedule based upon audience appeal, meaning that The Show Off might play fifteen performances during the same period in which Exit the King played six or fewer.

This explanation of his objection to subscriptions does not, however, explain his annual delays in selecting plays for each subsequent season.

49. The contract between APA and Theatre Incorporated stipulated that Rabb and Hambleton would provide the board with a list of plays and a budget for the coming season by 31 January each year. Rabb never met this deadline. In the 1968-69 season, Rabb even put off deciding upon Hamlet as the last production of the present season until six weeks before it opened.

50. Danny Newman, Subscribe Now! Building Arts Audiences Through Dynamic Subscription Promotion (New York: Theatre Communications Group, 1977, reprint 1983), 20.

51. Hambleton to Rabb, 23 December 1965, Phoenix Theatre Archive.

52. Hambleton memorandum to Board of Theatre Incorporated, 26 February 1968, Phoenix Theatre Archive. In this memo, Hambleton notes that they have consciously held their subscriptions to 18,000 when they should actually be in the range of 40,000.

53. Minutes of Theatre Incorporated Executive Committee Meeting, 17 February 1969, Phoenix Theatre Archive.

54. Cf. Lewis Funke, "A Repertory Theater Dies, but Not Its Dream," New York Times, 28 April 1969, 36; and Otis L. Guernsey, Best Plays of 1968-1969 (New York: Dodd, Mead, 1969), 108. Both Lewis and Guernsey claimed that the APA-Phoenix collapsed as a direct result of the NEA cutback.

55. See Houseman, Final Dress, 324-80 passim, for an account of how opaque Rabb's behavior became during the

final year of the APA-Phoenix. Hambleton had experienced the same tendency to withdraw in Stuart Vaughan years earlier (Vaughan to Hambleton, 4 October 1961, Phoenix Theatre Archive).

56. Rabb's divorce from Rosemary Harris was very difficult for Rabb and for the entire troupe. A transcript of an APA Company Meeting, 3 March 1969, Phoenix Theatre Archive, offers proof that Rabb's abilities to lead the company had reached a low ebb. In a 2 January meeting Brian Bedford was especially critical and asserted that the problems they faced had nothing to do with the Hambleton's administration. He felt that they originated from a lack of artistic leadership. It is clear from the 3 March transcript that Rabb had not yet decided on the repertoire for the upcoming engagements at Ravinia (near Chicago) or Ann Arbor. Yet he maintained throughout this meeting that it was Hambleton and the board of Theatre Incorporated that was failing to offer a sound plan of action.

57. Lewis Funke, "A Repertory Theater Dies, but Not Its Dream," 36.

58. Ball's ACT flourished in the vacuum left by the departure of Blau and Irving's Actors Workshop from San Francisco.

59. Minutes of Theatre Incorporated Board Meeting, 26 September 1968, Phoenix Theatre Archive.

60. Hambleton had previously used the tactic of mounting a show that was assured of at least not increasing the deficit. Once Upon a Mattress and You Can't Take It With You served the same purpose in 1959 and 1965 respectively.

61. Minutes of Theatre Incorporated Board Meeting, 19 November 1969, Phoenix Theatre Archive.

62. Lewis Funke, New York Times, 24 February 1970, 50.

63. Hambleton memorandum to Executive Committee of Board of Theatre Incorporated, 30 March 1970, Phoenix Theatre Archive. The Board agreed to allot enough funds for Duffey to mount a production of The Persians, to pursue education programs, and to pay him half a year's salary. Duffey had never directed professionally, and the consensus of the Board was that Theatre Incorporated could not afford to commit itself to Duffey until he had proven

himself competent in handling professional actors. Duffey was in charge of the 1970-71 artist-in-residence program discussed in Chapter Four.

64. Hambleton cited by Lewis Funke, New York Times, 24 February 1970, 50.

65. Hambleton memorandum to Theatre Incorporated Executive Committee, 14 April 1969, Phoenix Theatre Archive. Despite the confusion that appeared to reign between 1969 and 1971, the plan Hambleton outlined in this memo articulated all the major points of the one that would guide the New Phoenix Repertory in 1972 and even made note of Harold Prince's connections with the University of Pennsylvania. Prince had donated money for the Annenberg Center where the New Phoenix Repertory mounted its productions. Later Richard Kirschner became managing director of the Annenberg Center. Having worked on the Anderson Theatre Project with Hambleton, Kirschner welcomed the New Phoenix Repertory.

66. Porter had directed 14 productions for the APA, among them were Scapin, Wild Duck, Right You Are, The Show Off, The Misanthrope, and Private Lives. He had also directed the production of Harvey mentioned above.

67. George Gent, New York Times, 6 September 1972. Gent noted that the announcement of Prince directing O'Neill "had raised a few eyebrows along Broadway."

68. Harold Prince considers Hambleton's offer to join the New Phoenix Repertory to be an important point in his career (Interview by author, Tape recording, New York, New York, 2 October 1991).

69. The original plan for this out-of-town portion of the season was presented to the Board of Theatre Incorporated at its 10 November 1971 meeting and was precise in its division of commercial and university bookings with six weeks planned for each (Phoenix Theatre Archive).

70. In exchange, the University of Pennsylvania provided \$25,000 toward production budgets and a guarantee of \$30,000 per week. In addition, it bought \$10,000 worth of tickets which it distributed to students at a discount (Minutes of Theatre Incorporated Board Meeting, 9 February 1972, Phoenix Theatre Archive). Harold Prince noted that the interaction between the company and the university was never as prominent in the arrangement as he would have preferred (Prince interview, 2 October 1991).

71. Minutes of Theatre Incorporated Board Meeting, 18 July 1973, Phoenix Theatre Archive.

72. Minutes of Theatre Incorporated Board Meeting, 16 December 1966, Phoenix Theatre Archive.

73. Minutes of Theatre Incorporated Board Meeting, 29 March 1974, Phoenix Theatre Archive.

74. This does not mean that Hambleton expected box office receipts to cover costs but that he expected mounting and operating costs to be covered by the guarantees from the University of Pennsylvania and the box office receipts in Boston. This part of the plan proved to be workable, and by the second season they had a net gain as of the end of the Boston engagement (Minutes of Theatre Incorporated Board Meeting, 12 December 1973, Phoenix Theatre Archive).

75. In 1973 the NEA granted New Phoenix Repertory \$150,000 and NYSCA gave it \$40,000. The NEA had indicated support earlier than this. Hambleton informed the Board of Theatre Incorporated on 9 February 1972, of the favorable reaction of the NEA noting that it felt that the New Phoenix Repertory had created workable balance between "prime time" and university appearances.

76. The guarantee was substantial: \$74,500 in the third year (Minutes of Theatre Incorporated Board Meeting, 12 March 1975, Phoenix Theatre Archive).

77. As of December 1974, the New Phoenix Repertory was over-budget by \$75,000.

78. Richard Kirschner, telephone interview by author, Tape recording, 30 March 1992. With no funding, Kirschner was told he would have to operate the center as an independent producer. Instead, he resigned.

79. Minutes of Theatre Incorporated Board Meeting, 4 March 1975, Phoenix Theatre Archive.

80. Minutes of Theatre Incorporated Board Meeting, 15 January 1975, Phoenix Theatre Archive.

81. Although the union contract allowed the Phoenix to hire as few as three stagehands, more than this were needed to handle two shows in repertory (Dan Freudenberg, telephone interview with the author, Tape recording, 12 September 1991).

82. Minutes of Theatre Incorporated Board Meeting, 15 September 1976, Phoenix Theatre Archive.

83. Minutes of Theatre Incorporated Board Meeting, 29 January 1976, Phoenix Theatre Archive. The status of the Phoenix' contract with the John Drew Theatre is not mentioned in minutes of meetings for the months previous to January 1976, Hambleton does not remember any details concerning the matter, and I have found nothing concerning the matter in the correspondence files of the archive.

84. For a discussion of the suddenness with which the Guthrie established itself as one of the major theatres in the country, see Zeigler, Regional Theatre, 65-74.

85. Vance founded the Alley Theatre in 1947 (Zeigler, 26), Fichandler founded Arena Stage in 1950 (Zeigler, 31), and Blau and Irving began Actors Workshop in 1952 (Zeigler, 52).

86. Vaughan to Hambleton, 4 October 1961, Phoenix Theatre Archive.

87. Rockefeller Panel, The Performing Arts: Problems and Prospects, (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1965), 50.

88. Two of these theatres were headed by Phoenix alumni. Besides Stuart Vaughan, Gordon Davidson, who had stage managed for years for the Phoenix, moved to Los Angeles in 1964 to direct at the Center Theatre Group. He became that theatre's Artistic Director in 1966.

89. Sam Zolotow, "Broadway called a Traitor to Art," New York Times, 22 November 1965, 48.

90. Guernsey, Best Plays of 1965-1966, 41. Ten years later, when the regional theatre was providing Broadway with many of its new plays Guernsey demonstrated the same pro-Broadway bias when he claimed the underlying purpose of all institutional productions--whether they were mounted off-Broadway, off-off-Broadway, or in regional theatres--was to eventually make it to Broadway (Guernsey, Best Plays of 1975-1976, 7).

91. Vaughan, A Possible Theatre, 94.

92. Both Norman Nadel and Martin Gottfried published their objections to Blau's The Impossible Theatre. Nadel found him condescending to both audience and critics. Gottfried considered Blau's book claptrap. See Norman

Nadel, "Impossible Theater Coming to Lincoln Center," New York World-Telegram and Sun, 1 February 1965, and Martin Gottfried, A Theatre Divided: the Post War American Stage (Boston: Little, Brown, 1967), 117.

93. Robert Brustein, The Third Theatre (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1969), 178.

94. Jules Irving, interview by Bernard Taper, "Time, Talent, and Money: An Interview with Jules Irving," Lincoln Center Journal, November 1967, p. 14.

95. In 1974 Paul Libin claimed that he and Theodore Mann had devised a plan for limited runs that allowed actors with considerable experience to play challenging roles without taking them away for commercial projects for more than a few months. See Steven Langley, ed. Producers on Producing, 129-30.

96. Several sources cover Irving's justification for hiring stars from 1967 through 1971. See Bernard Taper "Time, Talent, and Money;" Jules Irving New York Times December 17, 1969 sec. 2, p. 3; and Ralph G. Martin, Lincoln Center for the Performing Arts (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1971), 93.

97. Of the award to the Phoenix, Lowry said, "I didn't feel it was fair to bypass the only nonprofit repertory theatre in New York that is already trying to put actors under contract for a full forty-week season" (John S. Wilson, "A New Band of Angels," Theatre Arts, 45, no. 5, (May 1961): 66).

98. Lois Calta, "Producers Favor Nonprofit Status," New York Times, 24 September 1966, 12. Theodore Mann was among those complaining loudest about the lack of foundation support for nonprofit off-Broadway theatres even though Circle in the Square had been nonprofit for only a few months.

99. Although the Ford Foundation grants under MacNeil Lowry's guidance favored resident companies, they did not favor repertory production. Lowry specifically discouraged Stuart Vaughan's effort at repertory production in Seattle and told Vaughan that repertory had not worked for Blau and Irving in San Francisco. Shortly thereafter the Ford Foundation turned down Vaughan's request for a grant to Seattle Repertory Theatre. See Vaughan, A Possible Theatre, 182.

100. The Lyceum opened in 1902, and Daniel Frohman had intended it to house a resident company. In 1965,

aside from the Vivian Beaumont, it was the only theatre in New York City with full technical facilities. These included a costume shop, scene shop, scene painting frame, separate plumbing fixtures for every dressing room, and storage for repertory sets. See Stuart Little, "A 63-Year-Old Dream Comes to Life," New York World Journal Tribune, 27 November 1966, 30-31; and the program for 16 May 1978 Lyceum Landmark Ceremony, Billy Rose Theatre Collection.

101. Hambleton to Rabb, 23 December 1965, Phoenix Theatre Archive.

102. Ibid.

103. Several people describe Hambleton as "tenacious" or "persistent": Ellis Rabb (letters to Hambleton, 29 July 1966 and 17 March 1968, Phoenix Theatre Archive); John Houseman, Front and Center, 317, 373; Stuart Vaughan, A Possible Theatre, 135; Richard Kirschner, interview 29 July 1991; Hal Prince, interview 2 October 1991.

104. Minutes of Theatre Incorporated Board Meeting, 4 October 1972, Phoenix Theatre Archive.

105. Minutes of Theatre Incorporated Board Meeting, 10 November 1971, Phoenix Theatre Archive. A School for Wives had a successful post-New York tour during the 1971-72 season.

106. Minutes of Theatre Incorporated Board Meeting for 12 December 1973 and 18 September 1974, Phoenix Theatre Archive. Both detail the board's discussion of this situation.

107. WABD broadcast five Phoenix offerings during the 1956-57 season.

108. See Vaughan, A Possible Theatre, 94; and Robert Brustein, Critical Moments: Reflections on Theatre and Society, 1973-79 (New York: Random House, 1980), 6-7.

109. The homogeneity of the board was a weakness of Theatre Incorporated that was never addressed.

110. This conference was held in Princeton, New Jersey, 2-4 June.

111. Cited in Stuart W. Little, After the FACT, Conflict and Consensus: A Report on the First American Congress of Theatre (New York: Arno, 1975), 32-3. This short

book is the only published account of what occurred at the conference.

112. Previously Barr, Edward Albee, and Clinton Wilder had been supporting the Playwrights Unit by using the strategy Hambleton espoused during the fifties. They had used profits from Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf? to fund the Playwrights Unit, a low-budget production workshop that started in 1962 at the Village South Theatre at 15 Van Dam Street. See Sam Zolotow, "Playwrights Get a New Workshop," New York Times, 13 November 1963, 34.

Although Barr had been producing nonprofit since 1965, his efforts to overcome barriers between nonprofit and commercial production are not comparable to those of Hambleton. Barr's nonprofit activity was limited to the workshop productions at the Playwrights Unit.

113. Many in attendance saw Barr's appeal as an attempt to shore up Broadway by allowing it to sap the strength of the nonprofit theatre. Among them were Richard Schechner, Julian Beck, and Judith Malina (Little, After the FACT, 46-60). Robert Brustein later claimed that the real purpose of the meeting was to save Broadway (The Culture Watch: Essays on Theatre and Society, 1969-74 [New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1975], 143-44).

The resistance to this conference doomed it to be the last as well as the first American Theatre Conference, and the nonprofit and Broadway theatres have not congregated again. Hambleton was elected president of the conference, but the resistance of many of the nonprofit theatres ended the effort (T. Edward Hambleton to author, 9 March 1993).

114. Of these three productions, only Murderous Angels included any commercial financing. Part of the financing was provided by Frank Granat and George W. George, two commercial producers (Martin Gottfried, "What shall it profit a theatre if . . . ?," New York Times, 23 August 1970, sec 2, p. 3). Oppenheimer and The Catonsville Nine were both mounted as nonprofit productions in New York. The important point is that all three productions were intended to win a larger audience for the plays.

115. This musical ran for 847 performances on Broadway and toured extensively after closing in New York.

116. Variety, "Sticks Making Hay on B'way," 9 October 1968; Guernsey, Best Plays of 1968-1969, 5; and Joseph Zeigler, Regional Theatre, 194.

117. Hambleton co-produced this with Alfred R. Stern in an arrangement that gave all profits to ANTA. See Best Plays of 1947-48, 411.

118. Variety, 11 August 1954.

119. Listing of box office receipts for The Golden Apple, undated, Phoenix Theatre Archive.

120. Even though these productions had been mounted under limited partnerships, the comparison to Hambleton's later nonprofit transfers is valid because Hambleton's approach to production and to transfers did not alter appreciably with the change to nonprofit status. Hambleton saw the decision to turn nonprofit as a financial necessity, not a change in philosophy.

121. This is the longest run of any production at the Phoenix.

122. Cost of Operation Balance Sheet, You Can't Take It With You, 18 June 1966, Phoenix Theatre Archive.

123. Houghton openly acknowledged the resemblance of this plan to the methods practiced by the Guild. The plan did not work, in part, because the commercial stage had grown so far away from the types of plays that interested a concern such as the Phoenix. In its early years, the Guild had managed to move more than one production each year onto Broadway, often enjoying large profits from such transfers. See the first chapter of Roy S. Waldau, Vintage Years of the Theatre Guild.

124. Martin Gottfried, "What Shall It Profit a Theatre."

125. A Chorus Line grossed over \$26,000,000 during the 1977-78 season. Joseph Zeigler (Regional Theatre, 231) takes note of Papp's unique position in relation to the regional theatre movement. He writes: "He shared its dream, but he lived outside its rules; he lived and worked by the rules of the New York game. His region was within the central situation, a psychological rather than a physical region. He was able to banish Broadway and still rub against it." All of these claims are equally valid for Hambleton.

126. John William Pereira, "A History of the Manhattan Theatre Club," (Ph.D. diss., City University of New York, 1986), 221-2.

127. Dewell was the general manager and Hersey served as casting director.

128. Minutes of Theatre Incorporated Board Meeting, 23 October 1958 and 17 November 1958, Phoenix Theatre Archive. During these meetings the Board further decreased risk: they decided to base the percentages they were offering to Dewell and Hersey on profits instead of gross receipts.

129. The Mary Stuart tour failed to make a profit, and Hambleton renegotiated with the National Phoenix when Once Upon a Mattress toured. Minutes of Theatre Incorporated Board Meeting, 24 March 1959, Phoenix Theatre Archive, show that under this agreement Theatre Incorporated received royalties for the tour and 10% of the profit.

130. Minutes of Theatre Incorporated Board Meeting, 28 January 1968, Phoenix Theatre Archive.

131. Minutes of Theatre Incorporated Board Meeting, 27 February 1969, Phoenix Theatre Archive.

132. Targets of Brustein's scorn include Joseph Papp's New York Shakespeare Festival, Arvin Brown's Long Wharf Theatre, and Lloyd Richard's Yale Repertory Theatre, each of which has a list of productions that have transferred to Broadway with intact staffs and casts.

Brustein does not claim that resisting the pull toward commercialism is simple, and in Making Scenes he offers several examples of his growing awareness of how complex the struggle against the commercial system can be.

133. In 1967 Martin Gottfried claimed that the Phoenix under Hambleton in the late 1950s offered an adventurous choice of plays and that choices after the APA-Phoenix merger had been more conservative (A Theatre Divided, 162).

134. Categorizing productions in such a manner as this is always subjective. One could quibble over the choices made, but the record of plays produced certainly does not suggest that the APA-Phoenix repertoire was becoming more commercial.

NOTES FOR CHAPTER SIX

1. The deficit stood at \$617,000 (Minutes of Theatre Incorporated Board Meeting, 15 May 1975, Phoenix Theatre Archive). Funds were becoming increasingly difficult to raise. See the discussion later in this chapter on page 211.

2. Though revivals had become increasingly more prominent on Broadway in the late 1960s and early 1970s, the 1975-76 season marked a new high in production of revivals. Best Plays lists 28 revivals and only 10 new plays on Broadway for the season. Although Best Plays includes musical revivals in this account, the 1975-76 edition lists only three operettas and three musical revivals, the result being that on Broadway there were more than twice as many revivals of straight plays as new plays for the season. Even discounting the five revivals mounted by the Bicentennial Theatre from Washington, D. C. and the three mounted for very limited runs by Houseman's Acting Company, revivals still outnumbered new plays in this season.

3. The number of new plays had stayed around 25 from 1964 through 1969. In the 1970-71 season this number dropped to 14. After a rebound to 18 in 1974-75, the number dropped to 10 in 1975-76. Revivals, on the other hand, had been steadily rising throughout the seventies and had outnumbered or equaled new plays each year.

4. New plays off-Broadway totaled 26 productions and revivals totaled 29.

5. Best Plays of 1973-74, 26.

6. Mel Gussow, "Wither Off Broadway?" New York Times, 27 January 1975, 21.

7. Walter Kerr, "They're Still Taking Chances Off Broadway," New York Times, 9 February 1975, sec. 2, p. 5.

8. Mel Gussow, "Papp Sounds Knell for Off Broadway," New York Times, 17 March 1975, 36.

9. The Marymount Theatre, which was owned by Marymount College, had 299 seats and rented for less than the 499-seat Playhouse.

10. Daniel Freudenberger, telephone interview by author, Tape recording, 12 September 1991.

11. 1976-77 Phoenix Theatre applications to NYSCA and NEA, Phoenix Theatre Archive.

A 24 September 1977 letter from Ruth Mayleas of NEA to Hambleton, Phoenix Theatre Archive, further corroborates Freudenberger's claim. In it she cites apparent lapses in planning as the reason that the Phoenix received only \$22,500 for the season. Hambleton had applied for \$50,000.

12. Freudenberger remembers that remounting costs were high because of the expense of fitting incoming productions into their space at the Marymount Manhattan Theatre.

13. Hambleton gave up production of revivals partly because they required more production expense than the new plays that were being written (Hambleton, interview by author, 6 June 1991, New York City).

14. Both Dan Freudenberger (telephone interview by the author, 12 September 1991) and Anne Cattaneo (interview by author, New York City, 2 March 1992) confirmed the Phoenix' reputation for casting. Freudenberger was very impressed with Hambleton's knowledge of the acting pool, and Cattaneo noted that actors working for the Phoenix in the late 1970s felt pleased to be a part of the Phoenix' tradition of great acting.

15. Walter Kerr, New York Times, 14 November 1976, sec. 2, p. 3.

The Negro Ensemble Company, the American Place Theatre, and Circle Repertory were operating under off-Broadway contracts at the time, but none of these theatres compares to the Phoenix program. Each had a focus that set it apart from what Hambleton was to pursue at the Phoenix during the next several years. The Negro Ensemble was, by definition, focused upon African-American material. Both American Place and the Circle Repertory produced new works; but American Place concentrated exclusively on American material and Circle Repertory built its repertory around the directing of Marshal Mason and the plays of Lanford Wilson. The Phoenix' more catholic choice of repertoire is more closely related to the work done by MTC and Playwrights Horizons.

16. Mimi Trochin, "Now We Are Ten," Other Stages, 20 November 1980, 3.

17. Don Shewey, "Can Playwrights Horizons Survive Success?" Village Voice, 17 May 1983, 94.

André Bishop became the artistic director of Playwrights Horizons in 1978. Although he stressed more professional and more fully developed productions, the theatre continued to operate under the showcase code until 1980.

18. Best Plays of 1974-75, 38.

19. In retrospect Hambleton admits that in 1961 he intended to offer a mixed schedule of new plays and revivals despite his public announcements that the Phoenix would concentrate on new plays (Hambleton interview, 6 June 1991).

20. In three seasons the Sideshow series mounted workshop productions of fifteen plays. The foreign playwrights produced were James Saunders (Games/After Liverpool, 1972-3); David Williamson (The Removalists, 1973-4); David Hare (Knuckle, 1974-5) and John Spurling (Macrune's Guevera, 1974-5). The sole regional playwright was Frank Gagliano (In the Voodoo Parlour of Marie Leveau, 1973-4). New playwrights were Richard Wesley (Strike Heaven on the Face, 1972-3); David Cranes (Horay [sic], 1972-3); Daffy Nathanson (Energy Crisis, 1973-4); John Forster (Pretzels, 1972-3); and Susan Miller (Flux, 1974-5).

21. Hambleton to Leonard Randolph, Literary Program Director for NEA, 1 August 1978, Phoenix Theatre Archive.

Richard Gottlieb, "Where Playwrights Try Their Wings," New York Times, 20 November 1977, sec. 2, p. 1, supports Hambleton's claim that Phoenix productions were more substantial than those of MTC or Playwrights Horizons. Two years later Robert Berkvist concurred ("Where New Playwrights Take Center Stage," New York Times, 21 October 1979, sec. 2, p. 7).

22. Wendy Wasserstein, telephone interview by author, Tape recording, 23 April 1992. Christopher Durang and Romulus Linney agreed that having a play produced by the Phoenix gave them a sense of recognition and exposure to the public (Telephone interviews with author, 3 April 1992).

23. Strained relations between Steve Robman and Wendy Wasserstein had crippled the effort to transfer the

Phoenix production. Had Hambleton moved the play, he would have had to find a new director (T. Edward Hambleton to author, 9 March 1993).

24. Cattaneo interview. Circle Repertory and Negro Ensemble Company also transferred productions. Of course, Joseph Papp was the off-Broadway producer who backed the most transfers. See p.

25. Cattaneo interview.

26. Durang interview. Zaks had very little professional directing experience, and Phoenix board members questioned whether Zaks should be entrusted with the Phoenix production (Cattaneo interview). Given Hambleton's record as a "hands-off" producer, it is highly unlikely that he would have insisted upon a change in directors had he produced the play on Broadway. Rather, he would have deferred to the playwright.

27. Ann Cattaneo, "When Comedy Is Commercial," Theatre Crafts, November/December, 1984, 85.

28. Wasserstein and Durang interviews.

29. Although the college was eager to accommodate the Phoenix, it also had to meet the needs of its students and requested that sets be struck after each week-night performance. The Phoenix managed to negotiate more stage time during its years at the Marymount Theatre, but the contract remained a burden until the Phoenix left in 1982 (Minutes of Theatre Incorporated Executive Committee Meeting, 11 January 1979; and Donna Lieberman, Phoenix Company Manager, to May Fleischer, Managing Director of Marymount Theatre, 28 August and 20 October 1980, Phoenix Theatre Archive).

30. These were Ladyhouse Blues by Kevin O'Morrison, Marco Polo by Jonathan Levy, G. R. Point by David Berry, Uncommon Women and Others by Wendy Wasserstein, and The Elusive Angel by Jack Gilhooley.

31. Israel Horowitz quoted in Best Plays of 1973-74, 44.

32. Richard Gottlieb, New York Times, 20 November 1977, sec. 2, p. 35.

33. Robert Berkvist and Richard Gottlieb both noted the cooperative rapport that had emerged amongst the Phoenix, Playwrights Horizons, and MTC. A workshop of a

given play at one theatre did not preclude a full production of the same play at another theatre, and a play might be given a reading at one theatre, a workshop at another, and a full production at yet a third. For example, Uncommon Women had been given a reading at Playwrights Horizons the season before the Phoenix produced it, and Ted Tally's Coming Attractions, which won wide acclaim for its production in November 1980 at Playwrights Horizons, developed a great deal through earlier readings and a workshop at the Phoenix the previous fall. (Cattaneo interview).

34. Freudenberger, interview.

35. Hambleton cited by Mel Gussow, New York Times, 27 December 1979, sec. 3, p. 15.

36. Minutes of Theatre Incorporated Board Meeting, 14 October 1978, Phoenix Theatre Archive.

37. Hambleton to Harold Prince, 7 August 1964, Phoenix Theatre Archive.

38. See Berkvist, "Where New Playwrights Take Center Stage."

Hambleton, Freudenberger, and Cattaneo expected that the fee they were offering would reimburse the playwright adequately to justify four to six weeks' work on the development of a new script. (Cattaneo interview.)

39. Letter of agreement between Wendy Wasserstein and the Phoenix Theatre, 15 August 1979, Phoenix Theatre Archive.

40. Both Lynne Meadow of MTC and Russell Vandenburg, literary manager of the Mark Taper Forum, have expressed reservations about the production of commissioned works. See Pereira, "History of the MTC," 283; and Ellyn Mara Gersh, "The Mark Taper Forum 1967-1982: A Critical Assessment," (Ph.D. diss., University of California, Los Angeles, 1986), 256.

41. Daniel Freudenberger announced the commitment to full production to the Board of Directors for Theatre Incorporated at the 14 October 1978 meeting, Phoenix Theatre Archive. Hambleton, Cattaneo, Freudenberger, Wasserstein, Durang, and Linney all concurred that the Phoenix intended to provide main stage production for each commission.

42. Variety, 25 January 1939.

43. Sam Zolotow, "Playwrights' Unit Receives Subsidy for Staging," New York Times, 1 June 1966, 43. The grant to the O'Neill Center totalled \$233,000 (New York Times, 7 November 1967, 48.)

44. The Rockefeller Foundation has tended to support more adventurous programs than the Ford Foundation. Martin Gottfried notes the difference in the types of programs the two foundations support (A Theatre Divided, 102). J. G. Harrar, "The Rockefeller Foundation and the Theatre in America," Players Magazine 44, no. 1 (October-November, 1968): 12-14, also pointed out that the Rockefeller Foundation had tended to support the interaction between professional companies and universities. The Ford Foundation had always insisted that such associations should be avoided. See Robert Brustein, Making Scenes, 135.

45. The fee to the theatres had increased to \$4,000 by 1978.

46. See Mel Gussow, New York Times, 1 January, 1978. sec. 2, p. 1, for a description of the selection process.

47. The information about deadlines and about the nullification of the contract are from the Wasserstein/Phoenix letter of agreement. The other details about the commissioning process are from the Cattaneo interview.

48. Isn't It Romantic was produced by Playwrights Horizons at the Theatre De Lys and ran from December 1983 to September 1985. Beyond Therapy was produced by Claire Nichtern on Broadway in May 1982, but it lasted only eleven performances. Both plays have been produced by regional theatres.

49. During a telephone interview (4 April 1992), Linney attested to successful regional productions of this play after the premiere at the Phoenix in 1981. Linney, Cattaneo, and Hambleton concur that the Phoenix production was a disappointment.

50. André Bishop telephone interview with author, 1 May 1992. All the details of this commissioning program come from this interview. Funding for the program came from the Hale Matthews Foundation and a private donor.

Bishop does not agree with the Phoenix strategy of ongoing consultations with the playwright. His strategy was to simply give the playwright money and see what developed.

51. This program is still active, with sixteen playwrights currently under commission. All information concerning the South Coast Repertory commissions is from the author's telephone interview with John Glore, 24 April 1992.

52. South Coast Repertory has a policy against revealing the amount of money it offers for commissions. Glore stated that commissions have ranged from two to ten thousand dollars since 1985.

53. Kate Leowald, telephone with author, 6 April 1993. All information regarding MTC's commissioning program is from this interview.

54. No other theatre in New York City has a commissioning program comparable to Hambleton's Playwrights' Commissioning Program. Ubu Repertory Theatre and the National Theatre Translation Fund, however, offer commissions for English translations of foreign plays. Ubu Repertory, which was founded in 1983 to produce English translations of French plays, has commissioned every translation it has produced (Françoise Kourilsky, telephone interview by author, Notes taken, 5 April 1993). The National Theatre Translation Fund operates under the auspices of the Literary Managers and Dramaturgs of the Americas and has offered eleven commissions for translations, five in 1991 and six in 1992. Like the Rockefeller Foundation, this fund has no production facility and places its translators with interested regional theatres (Kevin Duffy, telephone interview by author, Notes taken, 23 March 1993).

Aside from South Coast Repertory, several other regional theatres offer commissions. Actors Theatre of Louisville began to commission one-act plays in the early 1980s and since 1986 has commissioned fourteen plays that have been produced at its annual Humana Festival (Michael Bigelow Dixon, Literary Manager, to author, 5 May 1992). Commissions from Actors Theatre have generally gone to established playwrights such as Arthur Kopit and Marsha Norman. Arena Stage began a commissioning program in 1989, commissioning six plays in its first year of operation and eight the following year. Subsequently the program has dwindled to the point that only two commissions were offered for the 1992-93 season. Three commissioned plays have been produced on Arena's main stage (Larry Maslon, Associate Artistic Director, telephone interview by author, Notes taken, 6 April 1993).

Other regional theatres offer commissions that are focused on specific issues. The Great American History

Theatre in St. Paul, Minnesota, produces plays that deal specifically with the American Mid West and has commissioned most of the fifty-five world premieres that it has produced in the past fifteen years (Lance Belville, Artistic Director, telephone interview by author, Notes taken, 6 April 1993). Bainbridge Performing Arts of Bainbridge Island, Washington, has an extensive training program and commissions plays for large-cast productions that provide evenly weighted roles for children (Susan Glass Burdick, Artistic Director, telephone interview by author, Notes taken, 7 April 1993). Theatre IV in Richmond, Virginia, also serves a student audience. It often commissions plays that explore social issues, and for these commissions it assembles an advisory committee that examines each draft submitted by the commissioned playwright (Bruce Miller, Artistic Director, telephone interview by author, Notes taken, 6 April 1993).

55. Freudenberger to Robert Marx, NYSCA, 10 February 1978, Phoenix Theatre Archive.

Prior to coming to the Phoenix, Freudenberger had no professional directing credits. He had become the artistic director after rising through the ranks of the Phoenix organization. He joined the fund-raising staff in 1968 and was the production stage manager for The Persians (1970) and The Trial of the Catonsville Nine (1971), continuing in this capacity during the 1972-73 season. He became director of audience development in 1973, assistant managing director in 1974, and producing director in 1975. Prior the 1975-76 season he had directed two Sideshows: The Inspector General (1973) and Joyce Carole Oates' Miracle Play (1974). For the 1975 summer season at East Hampton, he directed Anouilh's The Rehearsal.

56. Between 1975 and 1980 Robman had directed at the Long Wharf Theatre, the Guthrie Theatre, Arena Stage, the Mark Taper Forum, Actors Theatre of Louisville, and the O'Neill Center.

57. Cattaneo interview.

58. When interviewed, Freudenberger specifically claimed that NYSCA and NEA were slighting the Phoenix. The grant applications to NYSCA and NEA (Phoenix Theatre Archive) during the period include complaints that the Phoenix was receiving less than its program deserved. The Phoenix' position is reflected in a letter by Freudenberger in which he wrote:

The Phoenix is a theatre that believes in paying actors, directors, and playwrights a living--albeit low--wage. We cannot understand the council's funding

of other theatres that pay a large staff and ask actors to work for car fare or for half of what we pay. We desperately need to join the other New York City new play theatres with budgets like ours of \$500,000 that are getting \$70-80,000 from NYSCA" (Freudenberger to Robert Marx, NYSCA, 10 February 1978).

59. Minutes of Theatre Incorporated Board Meeting, 15 May 1975, Phoenix Theatre Archive.

60. The Phoenix Theatre Archive includes the 1970s applications to NYSCA and NEA, and each duly notes the amount owed to Hambleton and includes a statement that further contributions were not likely to be forthcoming.

61. In 1974-75 the Phoenix had received \$135,000 from NEA and \$125,000 from NYSCA, but by 1976-77 the grants had dropped to \$22,500 and \$25,000 respectively. Although the support for the Phoenix grew modestly during the ensuing years, it did not reach the level of support given to other theatres in New York City that were concentrating on new plays. For example, in 1979-80 NYSCA gave MTC \$110,000, Playwrights Horizons \$86,000, and the Phoenix \$50,000.

62. Although apparently lost in the Phoenix Theatre Archive, correspondence from NYSCA to the Phoenix voiced this assumption quite directly. Hambleton responded in a 15 September letter in which he quotes from the lost document that claims his "ever-present supervision . . . across the decades" was the Phoenix' only source of continuity.

63. Wasserstein, Durang, and Cattaneo interviews.

64. Rabb, Los Angeles, to Hambleton, New York City, 23 September 1966, Phoenix Theatre Archive.

65. By Cattaneo's second year, the commissioning program had been outlined and the Phoenix was offering a season that included Marsha Norman's first play, Getting Out along with strong international productions: Ron Hutchinson's Says I, Says He, Botho Strauss' Big and Little, and Robert David McDonald's Chinchilla.

66. Minutes of Theatre Incorporated Board Meeting, 20 July 1982, Phoenix Theatre Archive.

67. Michael Feingold, "The Phoenix Theatre, 1953-82," Village Voice, 21 December 1982, 130.

NOTES FOR CHAPTER SEVEN

1. Richard A. Peterson, "From Impresario to Arts Administrator: Formal Accountability in Nonprofit Cultural Organizations," in Nonprofit Enterprise in the Arts: Studies in Mission and Constraint, ed. Paul J. DiMaggio comps (New York: Oxford, 1986), 164.

2. See p. 38 and Chapter One, n. 31 for discussion of Summer and Smoke; see p. 178 for details concerning The Great White Hope.

3. See p. 190.

4. Even Lincoln Center, with its vast resources, did not attempted to produce in repertory, opting instead to offer productions seriatim.

5. Hambleton to Rabb, 13 December 1965.

6. See Chapter Five, n. 123.

7. Even if his contribution to American Theatre had ended with his formation of the Mercury Theatre with Orson Welles in 1937, John Houseman would deserve recognition. Houseman's involvement in the formation of the Center Theatre Group in Los Angeles, in the development of the Stratford Shakespeare festival, and in the fledgling years of the Julliard school and the Acting Company are discussed in his books, Front and Center (Simon and Schuster, 1979) and Final Dress (Simon and Schuster, 1983).

8. See Brustein, Making Scenes, 135.

9. Other programs besides the Anderson Theatre Project may have served as models for these three undertakings.

10. Since 1979 several institutional theatres have begun offering commissions, notably Playwrights Horizons and Actors Theatre of Louisville. My research suggests, however, that South Coast Repertory's commissioning program is alone in its resemblance to Hambleton's Playwrights' Commissioning Program.

11. Robert Brustein, The Third Theatre (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1969), 224.

12. See p. 88.

13. The Phoenix' first student ticket program was offered for the 1954 production of Coriolanus. Following passage of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act in 1965, many institutional theatres began offering education programs. See p. 122.

14. See p. 70.

15. Clive Barnes, New York Post, 18 December 1982,
14.

16. See Chapter Six, n. 2.

17. Programs and subscription fliers for Theatre-by-the-Sea, ca. 1936, Billy Rose Theatre Collection.

18. See p. 203.

19. See p. 92.

20. Hambleton to Prince, 7 August 1964, Phoenix Theatre Archive.

21. See Chapter Five, n. 123.

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