

The reason I publish for others to produce (maybe even the reason that I write what I write) is to not necessarily ‘teach’ an audience some lesson, moral or pedagogical, but to present to a gathered group of thinking-feeling individuals, human beings on a stage in their sometimes-wisdom and oftentimes-folly, as unique, interesting, thinking, caring, if flawed individuals.

Every so often I come across a script that embodies, nearly perfectly and totally, what I value in a theatrical experience. I try to fill my catalog with those types of plays. Yes, I value entertainment — laughter and tears — without the value of being entertained, audiences become disengaged. If there is no entertainment the message to thinking-feeling beings is lost.

Theatre changes lives. The lives of the performers and production staff, AND the lives of the audience watching it. Characters are inhabited by a performer, shaped by them and those who aid in constructing the performance, so that each character can touch individual members of an audience in ways that seem to reach only the individuals in a group. An audience is there to be moved. Why else would we attend? We learn — hopefully — through visceral, secondary experience. Life would be really difficult if we had to go through each of these things, personally, directly. Theatre offers us this chance at change. Self-betterment.

The Greeks knew what they were doing as they shaped and molded their plays over a century to reflect those ideals best suited to their society; to effect individual change, to empower right-thinking decisions that would benefit a society, not just the individuals in it. It provided an encouraging direction for individual lives, if they would only find the courage to travel there; towards that place outside of themselves, while at the same time re-envisioning that place deep inside themselves.

Our society today is not so different. Oh, the technology has changed, but the nature of a thinking, breathing human being has not. Not really. We may think we are more sophisticated, more educated, more liberated, more anything-ated. But we seem to keep revisiting what earlier civilizations had already learned to their peril; like lemmings heading toward a cliff.

This is where through-provoking, emotion-arousing theatre comes in to play. It solidifies us as a people. It modifies us as does the softness of a mother’s voice, singing to her child of her love and concern. It paternally shouts at us to awaken, arise, step forth and do battle with ignorance, intolerance, ignominy, prejudice, ego, self-interest.

There is something concrete yet ethereal about a group of people sitting in the same room and experiencing the same production—differently. Theatre allows that. It lets us each bring different thoughts, life-experiences, even the vicissitudes of our daily lives to a large darkened room; it helps us let those things drop off of us as a snake shedding its skin; it gives us a time and a place to build and grow a new skin, with new thoughts and experiences inside that will improve and temper those that are waiting for us as we step outside of that room again to become our normal selves, yet somehow changed, altered, improved.

That is why I attend theatre. That is why I create theatre. That is why I publish theatre.

by C. Michael Perry

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