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Theater and Other Art Forms

This version of *Cinderella*, starring Whitney Houston, Bernadette Peters, Jason Alexander, and Brandy, effectively combines music, dance, and costumes to create a dazzling production.



Theater is a potpourri. It can contain anything that [a person] offers to others. . . .

—BERNARD BECKERMAN, CRITIC

SETTING THE SCENE

Focus Questions

How does each art form communicate theme, mood, action, character, and setting?

What elements and communication methods do different art forms share?

How are art forms affected by society and historical events?

What part do music, art, and dance play in drama?

Vocabulary

composer	ballet	Broadway musical
melody	modern dance	art director
lyrics	tap dance	opera-buffa
troubadours	synthesis	
choreographer	performance art	

Many art forms, including dance, music, and fine art, are combined in theatrical productions to support and enhance theme, mood, character, action, and setting. Because each art form provides a unique sensory experience, the appeal of the drama is broadened and enriched. As you study art forms in relation to theater, keep in mind that each art form also exists independently of theater. Dance has a history of its own, for example, as do music, fine art, and other art forms. In order to understand the contributions of each art form to theater, you must be familiar with the features of the art form itself.

Music

Music can only be fully expressed through performance because it is an auditory means of communication—it must be heard. The **composer**, or author, depends on musicians and conductors to interpret the work. The listeners must then translate sounds they hear into emotions and imagery. The ancient Greeks believed that musical scales had moral value because of the emotional responses they produced. They believed music could move a person to action or even make a listener lose consciousness. They also believed music could help bring about spiritual and physical well-being.

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Modern scientists have discovered that the Greeks were partially right in assigning emotional powers to music. In fact music is used today in treating pain, relieving tension, and stimulating brain activity.

The **melody**, or main musical phrase, expresses the general feeling of a composition. The tools a composer works with to shape the melody are tempo, rhythm, volume, key, and harmony. Through the combinations and variations of tempo and rhythm, a composer can write a slow, lulling song or a fast, exciting song, thereby expressing different moods. Volume also affects mood, setting, character, and theme. If a composer chooses a high volume, he or she could be presenting an angry or an exuberant mood

or character. When the volume is low, the mood might be relaxing or suspenseful. With the variations of volume in a composition come changes in mood and the development of theme. The choice of key and harmony can determine whether a composition is melancholy or joyful. The choice of musical instruments is another factor in expression; every instrument contributes a different sound to a composition. Whether a composition is written for a single instrument, for a symphony including violins and tympanis, or for a band using a drum set and electric guitars, each composition combines elements of tempo, rhythm, volume, key, and harmony to express mood, setting, character, and theme. A musical composition tells a story, and the imagination of each person involved—composer, conductor, musician, audience member—builds a slightly different story. Often, the addition of words, called **lyrics**, helps the listeners interpret the music. Like poetry, lyrics express themes, moods, and settings and sometimes describe characters. Because the rhythm and tempo of the melody can limit word choice, the meaning of the lyrics is often metaphorical or abstract. Thus a musical composition becomes a story that is different for each listener.

Another factor that adds to the versatility of music is the abundance of opportunities for hearing it. From the concertos heard while waiting on hold on the telephone to a song heard on the radio, music plays a part in everyday life. You don't always have to listen intently to a song or a composition to enjoy it. In fact you probably find yourself humming along without paying attention. The frequent opportunities for listening allow

music to reach people that other art forms do not reach.

Early humans, it is believed, made the first music by banging hollow logs with rocks and sticks, clapping their hands, stomping their feet, and imitating animal sounds. This primitive music aided in storytelling. The first historical traces of visual and written records of music come from Egypt. *Feast at the Home of Nakht*, an ancient Egyptian mural dating from c. 1360 B.C., shows basic string instruments. Written records tell of choral groups that performed for Egyptian kings. Unfortunately, no musical scores from ancient Egypt were written down, so we don't know what Egyptian music sounded like.

The ancient Greeks were the first to write down their music, allowing musicians to play a piece of music they had never heard. Most Greek music of the time was used to set the mood for poetry. Music was also a part of drama; the chorus would chant its lines. In Rome, music was considered one of the four essential areas of knowledge. Vitruvius, a Roman philosopher, included in his essay on architecture a description of how *hydraulis*, or hydraulic (water-powered) organs, were built. Like the Egyptians, the Romans did not write down their music, but we do know that Roman music was played in processions, in theatrical productions, and in gladiatorial contests.

During the Middle Ages, music became a staple of the Christian church. Church music enabled the members of the congregation to pay homage to God. As the Gothic Age began in the tenth century, trends in composition changed from religious music to music that communicated the composer's emotional struggles to the audience. Thus Gothic music was more personal and expressive than the music that preceded it. Most of the existing history of Gothic music comes from performers called **troubadours**, strolling musicians who set popular poetry to music they wrote. The Gothic era also gave us the first record of a female composer, Abbess Hildegard von Bingen, who wrote music that used either religious verses or her own poetry for lyrics.

Since the Gothic Age, music has gone through many changes. In the Renaissance, music expanded from the church into the households of the aristocracy. At festive dinners and dances, a small group of musicians secluded in an alcove or balcony would play background music. From this time on, musical history is full of geniuses whose works have survived to



This wall painting, *Feast at the Home of Nakht*, depicts instruments that were used in ancient Egypt. It was found in the tomb of Nakht in Thebes, Egypt.

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Another way that music has reached a broad audience is through MTV, Music Television, which broadcasts popular songs that are illustrated with videos.

this day. The baroque era gave us such composers as Vivaldi, Handel, and Bach; classicism gave us Haydn and Mozart; romanticism gave us Beethoven and Brahms; and realism gave us Wagner (väg' • nər) and Tchaikovsky (chī • kôf' • skē). Although each era had its own set of musical standards, the communication of theme became the main objective of composers. They also branched out, writing music for operas and for professional dance performances, such as ballets. Ballets and operas gave composers scope to describe characters and create a concrete setting in their music as the story was acted out onstage. Mozart was commissioned to write the music for *The Magic Flute*, a story of two sets of lovers and the trials they endured. With his ethereal music, he conveys the mystical, romantic world in which the lovers live.

At the beginning of the twentieth century came the modern era, when people loved to listen to such popular music as ragtime, blues, jazz, and swing. From these types of music came rock and roll, a musical movement that expressed rebellion and defiance of traditional values. The song "Rock Around the Clock" by Bill Haley and The Comets marked the beginning of this movement. The Beatles, one of the most influential rock bands, focused on social issues and Eastern religions in much of their music. On the other hand, bands such as the Rolling Stones mainly addressed emotional issues and youthful revolt. By late in the twentieth century, rock and roll encompassed many genres that had their own sounds and purposes. U2 rose to popularity through the bold social and political statements made in such songs as "Sunday Bloody Sunday"; whereas Bruce Springsteen often uses his songs to tell stories, such as in "Born to Run." REM, in the song "Man on the Moon," challenges the information that the media circulate, and Rap musician Puff Daddy makes a social statement about the conditions of America's inner cities. Many bands, such as the Orb, focus on rhythm and dance beat to emphasize the mood of their music.

Application ACTIVITY

Choose a song approved by your teacher to analyze. Give your interpretation of the theme of the composition. Explain what leads you to this interpretation. What, do you think, was the writer's purpose in composing this work? If the song has lyrics, how do they affect the communication of theme, mood, character, and setting? Present a report to your class, and, if possible, play a recording of the music you chose.

Dance

Dance is primarily a kinesthetic and a visual medium; however, most dance performances are accompanied by music, making dance both a visual and an auditory experience. Dancers use body language to communicate the theme, mood, and plot of a work to their audience. Their movements are designed by a **choreographer**, who combines a series of steps to produce a unique work. Choreographers may picture the mood, theme, tone, and plot they wish to portray, but they can't relate these elements directly to the audience. When the choreography is complete, the choreographer must instead depend on the dancers to interpret meaning and then translate this meaning to the audience, just as a composer must depend on musicians and a conductor to interpret and communicate his or her musical composition. Unlike the painter and the sculptor, whose canvas and sculpture are completed once for all time, the choreographer and the composer produce works that are open to the interpretation of the performers and of the audience members afresh at each performance.

Many classical **ballets**, such as *Swan Lake* and *The Nutcracker*, have plots with characters and action the dancers must present to the audience. Many other dances do not have plots, but they do have themes or moods for the dancers to portray. Dancers communicate the elements of plot, character, theme, mood, and action to the audience by executing the steps choreographed for the performance. They also rely on the accompanying music to enhance these elements. Often the intent of a choreographer is to produce movements and poses that portray universal emotions. Even audience members who know nothing of dance technique can find both meaning and satisfaction in a good dance production.

Dance, of course, is an ancient art form. In early human history, warriors and hunters celebrated their victories with ritual dances. Later, folk dances were handed down through generations, and nearly everyone joined in. Members of royal courts and the poor were equally likely to dance. Dancing was intended for participation, not observation. In fact, professional dance performances did not exist until the eighteenth century.

In 1993, Macaulay Culkin starred as the Nutcracker Prince in a motion-picture production of George Balanchine's *The Nutcracker*.



King Louis XIV of France is generally credited with having originated professional dance. Louis XIV loved to dance, but as he aged, his love for food proved stronger than his love of dance, and he was no longer able to participate in the elaborate dances he held at Versailles. Unwilling to be the only person not dancing, he built a balcony over a ballroom, from which he and other members of his court could watch the dancers below. Suddenly, the purpose of dancing changed: dancing was no longer thought of as primarily entertainment for the participants, but rather as a spectacle for the observers. Louis XIV later started the first dance school in Paris, and France became a leader in developing ballet technique. Ballet steps today are still named in French.

The first ballet performances were nothing like those of today. At first, only men performed. When women began appearing onstage, they were forced to wear the costumes of the times. Cumbersome corsets and long gowns of the eighteenth century made movement difficult. Any kind of vigorous dancing was impossible for the female dancers, so the men surpassed them in technique, developing sophisticated, daring routines. Slowly, the styles of the costumes worn by women became more accommodating. By the middle of the nineteenth century, female ballet dancers were wearing tutus and tights and were often upstaging men with such techniques as dancing on the tips of their toes. Toe dancing was made possible by the invention of *pointe* shoes, which were designed to support the ballerina's feet. Some men's roles even began to be played by women. Russian dancers and choreographers, who dominated the field in the late nineteenth century,

changed the course of ballet and introduced many of the most famous ballets, including *Swan Lake*, *The Nutcracker*, and *Sleeping Beauty*. Russia provided the twentieth century with some of the superstars of ballet. Rudolf Nureyev (nŭŕ' • ĭ • yĕv) and Mikhail Baryshnikov (bă • rĭsh' • nĭ • kôf') were both born in the former Soviet Union.

Out of classical ballet came many other forms of **modern dance**. Isadora Duncan (who danced from 1899 to 1927) is often considered the founder of modern dance. She believed that the structured techniques of ballet were too confining; she let her hair fall naturally over loose-fitting robes, and she ignored structure in favor of communicating soul and emotion to her enraptured audiences. Fred Astaire, another twentieth-century dancer, delighted his large audiences. His **tap dances**, included in famous movie routines with equally talented partners like Ginger Rogers, changed dance. His dances, like all dances, were a visual product, but the sound of his shoes clicking against the dance floor produced rhythm and music, making his dances an auditory experience as well. Multiculturalism also changed dance. Choreographer Alvin

CUE

Mikhail Baryshnikov broke new ground in the synthesis of dance and music when he danced to the beat of his own heart. Artist Christopher Janney attached a device to the dancer that captured the electrical impulses passing through his body as he danced. These impulses then regulated the accompanying music.

Ailey, for example, set his dances to African American spirituals and southern blues songs. He formed the Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater, a multiracial troupe. Another choreographer, Arthur Mitchell, composed a Creole version of the classic ballet *Giselle*. Mitchell started the Dance Theater of Harlem and incorporated ballet, jazz, and modern dance into his performances. Other modern dance choreographers, such as Twyla Tharp, have blended several types of dance, like ballet, jazz, and tap, into their dance routines. Contemporary dances often have themes different from traditional ballets. Modern-dance choreographers generally portray universal emotions, but in the twentieth century, they have also added social commentary to their dances, using dance as a medium to explore the social problems of the day.

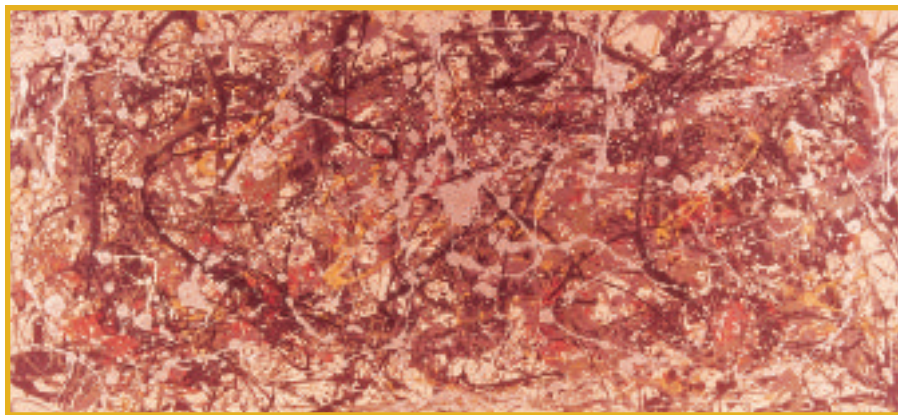


Alvin Ailey choreographed dances for African American spirituals in his most popular production, *Revelations*. The Alvin Ailey American Dance Company has performed in many countries around the globe.

Application ACTIVITIES

1. Working with a partner, choose a brief scene—either one from a play or one that you invent—and interpret it through dance movements. If you want, choreograph your scene to music of your choosing. Keep in mind that even everyday movements can be incorporated into dance. The key is to portray interactions without dialogue. Perform your dance for the class; then discuss what was most and least successful about your performance.
2. Nations and cultures often develop special styles of dance that employ traditional costumes and specific movements. Investigate the traditional dances and costumes associated with a culture of your choosing; then report your findings to the class.

Jackson Pollock uses line and color to create mood in his painting *Number 8*. Pollock's innovative technique included squirting, drizzling, and dripping ordinary house paint onto huge canvases.



Fine Art

Fine art is a visual art form produced through many mediums. Paintings, sketches, sculptures, and even some crafts are considered fine art. Sometimes it is difficult to understand the message or main idea of a particular artwork. Like drama, fine art forms communicate mood, characters, setting, and theme in many ways. In order to understand a work of art, it is helpful to learn about some of the basic elements that make up fine art—color, line, texture, shape, form, and space.

Each of these elements is present to some extent in every work of art—no matter what art medium is used. Through the blending, contrasting, and placement of color, an artist can express the overall emotion, or mood, of a work. Color is also used to symbolize ideas or other nonvisual concepts. Lines are used in art to form images, emphasize or de-emphasize the outlines of objects, form borders, and define spaces. Lines may also convey setting and express action in a work of art. Texture, through the use of fine, delicate brushstrokes or thick, heavy brushstrokes, may affect the mood and, therefore, the interpretation of a painting. In sculpture, texture defines and separates forms and space. Shapes, which are two-dimensional, and forms, which are three-dimensional, define objects in a work of art and are made up of any or all of the other elements. Space, the distance or area between, around, or within objects, can be either two- or three-dimensional. Space is often used to emphasize or de-emphasize certain parts of a painting or sculpture. For example, by leaving empty space around an object, an artist forces an observer's eye to focus on that object.

Character, setting, and mood all contribute to interpretation. Sometimes an artist might make a statement by portraying characters in new and surprising ways. A kind, gentle historical character might be portrayed as villainous, or a villainous character might be portrayed as kind and gentle. This type of role reversal often served as political propaganda. Jacques-Louis David, a court painter for Napoleon, portrayed Napoleon as a benevolent ruler who sacrificed his spare time for his subjects' benefit.

David conveyed this theme through details in the portrait's setting. Setting also affects the interpretation of mood and is sometimes used to identify and place characters in context. In landscape paintings, often the setting itself is the character.

Some modern artists don't use objects, people, or landscapes in their works; instead, these artists include only colors, lines, textures, or abstract shapes to convey theme or mood. Twentieth-century American painter Jackson Pollock produced paintings with no apparent characters or setting. Instead he expressed mood through his technique of spattering colors on large canvases.

To fully understand a piece of fine art, you must try to identify its theme, or main idea. The basic elements of art are used to convey theme, but other factors also affect interpretation. For example, consider the work's historical background and the purpose it served. The Native Americans of the western United States used cave and rock paintings to express ideas, actions, and emotions. A drawing of a buffalo might identify an area where buffalo gathered or might mark a warrior's first successful hunt.

Many paintings and sculptures throughout history have illustrated important historical events or people, while more recent artists have used their work to comment on social issues. Francisco Goya, an early nineteenth-century Spanish painter, illustrated the consequences of war in his painting *The Third of May, 1808*. Knowing the history of the French invasions of Spain will aid your understanding of this painting by Goya.

Artists are also influenced by the various artistic movements that have shaped art forms throughout history. In the mid-nineteenth century, artists became interested in representing a true depiction of everyday life, giving birth to **realism**. Playwright Henrik Ibsen, known as the father of realism, began the realistic movement in drama with his play *A Doll's House*. Gustave Courbet and Édouard Manet are painters known for their realist styles, while in literature, Gustave Flaubert's *Madame Bovary* epitomized

the realist movement. Many artists, dramatists, and composers are categorized according to the artistic movement with which their style is associated.



This painting, *The Third of May, 1808*, is part of Francisco Goya's *Disasters of War*, a series of paintings that chronicles the French invasion of Spain in 1808.

Application ACTIVITY

Look at a painting or a sculpture. Identify the artist's use of the basic elements of art—color, line, texture, shape, form, and space. Then write your interpretation of the work, explaining how each of these elements contributes to mood, character, setting, and theme.

Common Elements and Influences

As you learn more about different art forms, you'll find that most share similar communication methods and elements. A comparison can be made among the art forms of music, dance, and fine art. Even though visual interpretation and auditory interpretation differ, the main elements of theme, mood, character, and setting may be conveyed in similar fashions. For example, mood is often created by color and line in fine art. In music, mood is also created by color and line if you imagine the harmonies and keys as the color and the melody as the line. Dance, which usually combines the visual and auditory senses, portrays color with the accompanying music, the costumes, and the scenery; it portrays line with the movement and placement of the dancers. Not only do these art forms share communication methods, they also share many of the same influences, including the historical context and the artistic movement of the period in which the works appeared.

The art forms of dance, music, fine art, and literature have always been influenced by social and philosophical movements of the day. Consider, for example, the romantic period, which began in the late eighteenth century and continued through the first half of the nineteenth century. Romantics had similar, although not identical, views about life and art. They were primarily striving for freedom and free expression of their personal feelings. Unlike the classicists who preceded them, romantics did not seek perfection of form and design. If classicism was the age of reason, then romanticism was the age of individuality, nature, and emotion, which flowered in the "cult of feeling." In literature, the famous romantic poet William Wordsworth wrote that "... all good poetry is the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings."

Authors expressed romantic moods and themes through descriptions of beauty, and their works were often set in nature. In fine art,

painters ignored the strict forms of past years and gave voice to their personal feelings. Eugène Delacroix, one of the leading painters of the romantic movement, painted a scene of people's search for freedom



Jean-Baptiste-Camille Corot was one of the great romantic landscape painters. His delicate brushstrokes and soft colors present a gentle view of nature.

in his famous work *Liberty Leading the People*. Other romantic painters joined their literary counterparts in using nature as a setting. Such painters as J. M. W. Turner and Jean-Baptiste-Camille Corot (kô • rō') are famous for their landscapes.

As a result of the romantic movement, composers began listening to their own needs, primarily composing works for the general public instead of works commissioned by the aristocracy. Although the music of the romantic period is as diverse as the art and literature of the time, the composers of this era shared a desire to achieve an emotional response from the audience. They called forth emotions by producing "musical tension," although each composer had a different idea about how to do so. Many renowned composers such as Beethoven, Schubert, Chopin, and Verdi (vâr' • dē) were romantic composers.

The romantic era also had a profound impact on the world of dance. Romantic ballets, such as *Giselle* and *Les Sylphides*, demanded that ballerinas be fairy-like creatures with pale skin, pink tights, and pink satin *pointe* shoes. Performances often had supernatural settings and ghostly mists. As women of the time were rejecting the previous age's tight corsets in favor of softer, flowing garments, so too did ballerinas, gaining more freedom of expression. The romantic period's tutu had a stiff white bodice, but the skirt (falling anywhere from just below the knee to just above the ankle) was made of many layers of soft fabric, which flowed gently about the dancer as she moved.

Romanticism influenced all of the art forms, sometimes resulting in similar themes, moods, and characters. Other periods throughout history have also given rise to an expression common to the art forms. A search for realism in literature and drama, for example, paralleled a search for realism in fine art and music. Artists from each art form work to communicate the ideas, themes, and moods that are widespread in their era.

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At an early age, Beethoven had to give up performing due to the onset of deafness. Despite this handicap, he continued composing until his death. The movie *Immortal Beloved* tells his life story.

Application ACTIVITIES

1. Choose two art forms and compare and contrast their means of communicating theme, mood, setting, and character. Compare the elements used, but be sure to explain how the art forms are different. Investigate the ways these art forms reach their audience. Discuss your findings with the class.
2. Investigate a historical period, focusing on a particular artistic movement. In a report, include the social and political occurrences of the day, along with the many art forms affected by the movement.

Synthesis of Art Forms in Theater

The **synthesis**, or combination of elements to form a whole, of art forms in theater produces a comprehensive visual and auditory performance. Because drama is a type of literature, movements in drama have closely followed movements in literature. Philosophy has also had an impact on drama. In ancient Greece, the philosopher Plato wrote about mimesis (imitation) and Aristotle wrote an essay on the elements of tragedy. More recently, philosopher Jean-Paul Sartre crossed over from philosophical writing to write the play *No Exit*, which portrayed his existentialist ideas.

Playwrights express their artistic ideas and interests, as well as comment on life as they perceive it, through the synthesis of dialogue, fine art, music, and dance. In fact some of the most imaginative art combines aspects of different art forms.

Performance art blends a wide variety of art forms and is always unique and unprecedented. These performances include a combination of some or all of the following art forms: music, dance, fine art, poetry, improvisation, comedy, and acting. Some performance artists begin their shows with only an idea and improvise the entire performance. Spalding Gray, for example, takes the stage with only a list of key words and tells stories of his life, always adding a comic twist. Performance art began in the 1960s as an **avant-garde** art form—a term that still applies to performance art today. In the 1980s, Laurie Anderson brought performance art to mainstream culture. In her performances, she focused on difficult social issues and human emotions, enhancing the performances with synthesized music, innovative lighting, and

striking gestures and poses. At the end of the 1990s, performance artists like Anderson, Gray, and Eric Bogosian were drawing large audiences around the world. Like performance art, theater also incorporates many art forms.

MUSIC AND THEATER

Music has accompanied theater since the beginning of Western drama. The ancient Greek dramas began as a chorus that chanted dialogue. As drama evolved, individuals began to step out of the chorus to speak their lines, but the role of the chorus remained intact. The chorus has even been used in modern plays, such as Jean Anouilh's *Antigone*. The use of music by the chorus sets the mood and establishes setting and character.

Perhaps the kind of theater that depends the most on music is the **opera**. In the seventeenth century, opera was born in an attempt to reproduce ancient Greek performances. Opera changed the role of music—both instrumental and vocal—from accompaniment to the focus of the production. Many composers have written operatic works, including Handel, who composed the *Messiah*, and Mozart, who wrote music for *The Marriage of Figaro*. Opera communicates largely through music, which is responsible for establishing mood and theme. Opera is usually performed in Italian or German; unless subtitles are provided, audiences that speak other languages must rely on the music and stage performance to interpret the play.

As time passed, opera evolved into several different genres, and one of them gave us the musicals we have today. Music plays a tremendous role in setting mood and illustrating character in musical theater. For example, in Prokofiev's (prō • kō' • fē • əf) musical fairy tale *Peter and the Wolf*, a different musical instrument is introduced when each character is introduced. The instrument and its particular melody remain associated with that character. The high-pitched, fluttering sounds of the flute represent birds. The invigorating sounds of rhythmical violins represent Peter, and the ominous sounds of kettledrums represent the hunters.

In the twentieth century, adding popular music to theater resulted in **Broadway musicals**. In the middle of the century, Rodgers and



Performance artist Laurie Anderson communicates her message through the inventive use of music, monologue, gesture, lighting, and special effects.

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In 1994 several rock-and-roll singers from Georgia, including the Indigo Girls, put together their own rendition of *Jesus Christ Superstar*. They only gave a limited number of performances, but the CD version was a success.

Hammerstein, George and Ira Gershwin, and Lerner and Loewe popularized this form of theater with productions like *Oklahoma!* More recently, works like *Hair*, *Jesus Christ Superstar*, *Tommy*, and *Bring in da Noise, Bring in da Funk* successfully used contemporary music to convey plot, character, mood, and setting.

Music is important in film, too. Obviously, films like *Evita* rely heavily on music, but other films that don't have music as the main focus rely on it as well. The theme music of a film sets the mood. For example, the opening music for *Star Wars* sets an exciting, adventurous mood. Background music also conveys mood and has become more important since the rise in popularity of soundtracks. The addition of music to film has given writers and directors more to work with: now they can rely on music to enhance or even convey mood, theme, character, action, and setting.

DANCE AND THEATER

Dance, like literature and fine art, has evolved over the centuries. During the twentieth century, the philosophy of the modernists influenced literature, fine art, and dance. In literature ordinary speech replaced "poetic," or literary, speech. In the world of fine art, such artists as Picasso and Cézanne began to present objects subjectively instead of simply copying an object's appearance. Dance, too, has seen a modern era. Revolutionary dancer Isadora Duncan replaced traditional, rigid dance steps with freer movements that expressed her emotions. Another choreographer, David Gordon, constructed pieces in which the dancers appeared not to be dancing at all. Instead, they moved around the stage performing ordinary movements.

German-born modern dancer Hanya Holm ran a dance school in the United States, where she taught students to use dramatic movements. Holm was also a choreographer, providing dance routines for such musical productions as *My Fair Lady*, *Camelot*, and *Kiss Me Kate*. Musicals frequently include dance routines in their productions, aiding in the communication of mood, character, theme, and plot. The style of dance chosen for a performance affects the interpretation of tone, as do the styles of music, costume, and stage direction.

Modern dance, jazz, and tap were not the only dance styles included in musical theater productions. George Balanchine was a famous Russian ballet choreographer who founded the New York City Ballet. In the 1930s, he choreographed *Ziegfeld Follies*, a Broadway musical starring Josephine Baker and Bob Hope. With this production, ballet became part of the popular musical. Richard Rodgers and Lorenz Hart soon wrote *On Your Toes*, a musical about ballet and jazz that was also choreographed by Balanchine. Rodgers

and Hart went on to write three more musicals for which Balanchine provided the choreography. Another famous ballet choreographer, Agnes de Mille, provided the dance routines for *Oklahoma!*, a musical by Richard Rodgers and Oscar Hammerstein II.

Just as the composers of musical theater have used dance to aid communication, so, too, have dance choreographers seen the benefits of adding other elements to their performances to relay mood, theme, and plot to their audiences. Many modern dance routines, especially, rely on other art forms to enhance communication. Some choreographers have added dialogue to their performances in an effort to communicate their themes and ideas to the audience. The addition of dialogue to dance routines narrows the gap between theater and dance performances. Acts like those of Stomp, a contemporary performance group that blends auditory and visual effects, also narrow the gap between the theater and dance. Instead of using an orchestra or a band to provide music to accompany their dance routines, the members of Stomp provide their own percussion as they dance. Their performance is even more revolutionary because of the “instruments” they use. They make music with such everyday items as brooms, dustbins, hubcaps, plastic bags, and lighters.

FROM THE PROS

“Songs, dances, and story have been triumphantly blended. The Rodgers score is one of his best. . . . Hammerstein has written a dramatically original libretto and a string of catchy lyrics; Agnes de Mille has worked small miracles. . . .”

—HOWARD BARNES,
CRITIC, ON
OKLAHOMA!

FINE ART AND THEATER

Fine art in theater takes many forms, including stage design, costumes, makeup, and lighting. All of these forms combine in theater to help convey theme, character, setting, and mood in stage productions. Therefore, it is important to view the stage in a theater production as if it were a painting or a sculpture. In that way, one can fully appreciate theater as a complete art form.

As drama developed over time, the importance of art in the theater grew, as did the role of the art director. The **art director** determines the overall “look” of the play. He or she must work closely with the director and the makeup, costuming, and lighting designers to achieve the desired effect in a production. The first thing the audience sees when the curtain goes up or the lights go on is the set. This first impression can establish the mood of the entire production before a single line is spoken. The extravagant staircase in *Sunset Boulevard*, for example, conveys an entirely different mood from the stark, barren bench and dead tree in *Waiting for Godot*. The art director can suggest a variety of moods by creatively using lines and space. To convey a sense of confinement, the art director might place the ceiling and walls close to the actor. By spreading elements of the set far apart and leaving the ceiling open, the art director can suggest freedom and openness.

Theater has always reflected the artistic styles and tastes of the time. In fact many art directors have borrowed from great artists, popular genres, and great works of art in designing their shows. The scenery of Steven Sondheim's *Sunday in the Park with George* was based on the paintings of the French artist Georges Seurat (sə • rä'). Seurat was the first painter to use a technique called pointillism. Rather than presenting a realistic image, Seurat used small dots of paint in contrasting colors to form images. His most famous pointillist work, *A Sunday Afternoon on the Island of La Grande Jatte*, illustrates a Parisian park bustling with people.

The expressionist movement came to the stage in the early twentieth century through the works of the Norwegian artist Edvard Munch (mōōngk). Munch is best known for his work *The Scream*, which illustrates this expressionist idea: artists should produce art that explores how human emotions affect one's view of the world. In 1906 Munch was asked to incorporate his dark, eerie style into a design for Henrik Ibsen's play *Ghosts*. Theater critics praised Munch's design for successfully conveying the mood of the play.

Another artist who influenced theater is Marc Chagall. One of nine children from a poor Jewish family living in Russia, Chagall studied art and developed an artistic style unlike anyone else's at the time. After the Communist Revolution in Russia, Chagall designed stage sets at the Jewish Theater in Moscow. It is no surprise that the art direction for *Fiddler on the Roof* was based on Marc Chagall's paintings. The play and many of Chagall's paintings share the same theme—the trials of being Jewish in Russia.

Filmmakers, like theater directors, often look to fine artists for artistic direction in motion-picture productions. Artists are often consulted during the preliminary stages of film production and asked to draw a series of concept illustrations. For example, George Lucas contacted artist Ralph McQuarrie to create production drawings that would establish the look for Lucas's *Star Wars* trilogy of films. Lucas's perception of the future included dented machines, robots with makeshift parts, and faulty equipment. McQuarrie's drawings brought to life Lucas's original vision of a world that had a "lived-in" look—a radical departure from the white, sanitized vision of earlier science fiction films like *2001: A Space Odyssey*. Some modern directors, such as Ridley Scott (*Alien*, 1979; *Blade Runner*, 1982), are known for their distinctive settings. In the setting for *Alien*, with its eerie smoke, dark images, and unique structures, Scott effectively uses color, texture, shape, and space to convey the mood of a frightening futuristic world.

FROM THE PROS

"There are certain moments in movies where the background can be as important as the actor."

—RIDLEY SCOTT,
DIRECTOR



This setting from *Alien* uses neutral colors, rough textures, unfamiliar shapes, and empty space to create the image of a frightening, hostile world.

Application ACTIVITY

Choose a scene from “A Treasury of Scenes and Monologues.” Then choose a specific work of art or an artistic style that might effectively convey the mood and theme of the scene. Summarize your choice in a report or a class demonstration.

THEATER AND MUSICAL THEATER

Drama is set apart from other forms of literature by the way it communicates meaning, theme, mood, setting, and plot. Instead of simply writing text down and relying on readers to interpret the written word, dramatists write dialogue that is meant to be spoken by actors. Therefore, the work of a dramatist is interpreted several times: by the director, who interprets and communicates meaning to the actors; by the actors, who interpret and communicate meaning to the audience; and by the audience members, who form their own interpretations, using both the original words provided by the dramatist and the expressions, gestures, and intonations provided by the actors.

Theater In straight plays, the use of fine art often sets the scene. Many famous artists have crossed over to work on set design, giving the production an additional flavor. For example, David Hockney’s stage design,

This drawing by David Hockney was used as a set design in Alfred Jarry's absurdist play *Ubu Roi*. Even Hockney's eraser marks and corrections were transposed to the final set design.



with his crudely drawn lettering to denote location, illustrated the cartoonish quality of Alfred Jarry's absurdist depiction of life in *Ubu Roi*. Costumes and stage lighting are also art forms that help convey the mood and setting of a play.

Whether the work is a period piece or a stylized production, costumes and stage lighting contribute to communicating the theme to the audience. The introductory music, whether light and melodious or dark and dramatic, prepares the audience for the mood of the production, while background and change music sustain it.

Musical Theater Like theater, musical theater integrates elements of art, dance, music, and drama in one performance. In musical theater, however, music is the key element, not simply an accompaniment. Its origin is opera, a staged musical production introduced in Florence, Italy, in the seventeenth century. Operas include elaborate costumes, which are often considered artworks in themselves. Dance is often included in the production. Lighting, elaborate scenery, and costumes help establish the mood and the setting. Mozart, one of the most renowned composers of opera, advanced the form by blending accomplished classical music with "real" characters, whose emotions and situations would have been familiar to his audiences. Many other composers based their operas on famous works of literature, such as *Faust*. Not all operas are written in classical music: George Gershwin combined elements of jazz, blues, spirituals, and folk music in his folk opera, *Porgy and Bess*.

Until the nineteenth century, musical productions other than opera were mostly farcical plays that featured popular musical numbers occurring randomly within them. In Italy a performance called **opera-buffa**, which incorporated dialogue and light music, began to appear. In France this kind of lighter performance became known as *opéra-comique* and later *opéra-bouffe*. Instead of the serious plots and heavy music of the opera, *opéra-bouffe* offered a series of comical, satirical sketches. This allowed for the addition of creative costuming and more relaxed set design. One of the hits of the time, *Don Quichotte and Sancho Panza*,

borrowed heavily from literature. The characters were taken directly from Cervantes's early seventeenth-century work *Don Quixote*. The gifted composer Hervé set Cervantes's story to music and produced a successful blend of literature and popular music.

With the rise of such superstar composers as Irving Berlin, Cole Porter, Jerome Kern, and George Gershwin, musical comedies became very popular in the 1920s. They featured elaborate costumes and sets that portrayed the light-hearted mood of the productions. These musical comedies also included popular dance, which energized the performance. Broadway musicals still blend various art forms to achieve mood. Whether presenting a musical tragedy such as *West Side Story* or a spoof such as *How to Succeed in Business Without Really Trying*, the combination of various art forms in theater always helps to communicate theme, mood, action, character, and setting.

Application ACTIVITY

Choose a movie or a videotape of a play to watch. As you view it, pay particular attention to the different art forms that are blended into the work. Make notes of how the music, set design, and choreography affect the representation of theme, mood, character, and action. You may need to view the work more than once to pay attention to all of the art forms used. Compile your observations in a report and present it to your class.



Musical theater incorporates many art forms in a single production. In *Fiddler on the Roof*, folk dancing, traditional music, and realistic costuming and stage design combine to portray Jewish life in a small Russian village.



CHAPTER

15

REVIEW

Summary and Key Ideas

Summarize the chapter by answering the following questions.

1. How do melodies and lyrics affect interpretation of music?
2. How has ballet affected dance?
3. What are the main elements used in fine art to convey mood, theme, character, action, and setting?
4. What are the responsibilities of the art director?
5. How do time period and historical events affect different forms of art?
6. How does the synthesis of many art forms in theater help convey theme?

Discussing Ideas

1. Which current movies or television shows use music effectively to establish mood? Explain why you think so.
2. Discuss the following statement: "Movement is the heart of ballet." Do you agree or disagree with this statement? Explain your reasons.
3. Analyze the elements of a piece of fine art pictured in this chapter. Discuss how the artist's use of line, color, texture, and any other element clarifies the theme or mood.
4. How much impact do you think society and history have on art forms? Discuss your opinions with the class. Cite examples to back up your point.

FOCUS ON

The Arts

Other art forms have had a powerful impact on the theater. The stage is a place where many disciplines blend to give us challenging artistic experiences.

Analyzing the Arts Use what you learned in this chapter to write an essay comparing and contrasting the methods of communication of fine art, music, dance, and theater. Also describe the reciprocal relationships between the theater and the other arts. Include examples to support your ideas.

Viewing and Doing Watch a piece of

theater that combines more than one art form. You might view performance art, an opera, a musical, a Gene Kelly or Fred Astaire movie, or a movie or play with a striking appearance. Evaluate how all the elements of the production worked together. Then, keeping in mind what you've learned, get together with a small group to plan and present an informal performance that synthesizes two or more art forms—such as a scene with a musical or dance number. For help with constructing the performance, see the Reference Section.

REVIEW WORKSHOP

THEATER AND OTHER ART FORMS

INDEPENDENT ACTIVITIES

Children's Musical Make a plan for adapting a children's story to the musical theater. Begin by choosing a story you think would make a good musical. It might be a familiar children's story like *Hansel and Gretel* or a lesser-known story from a children's book. Decide on the actors you would want in the starring roles. Identify places where a song on a particular subject might be appropriate. Finally, choose well-known children's songs, like "Old MacDonald Had a Farm," or any other appropriate songs to use in the musical.

You Are the Art Director Plan the stage design for a play with which you are familiar. Begin by reading the play and interpreting its mood and theme. Next, create sketches or gather pictures to coordinate an overall "look" for the setting. Be sure to include an appropriate use of color, space, and props. Prepare a short presentation for the class in which you explain the play and how your design effectively conveys its mood and theme.



Cooperative Learning Activity

Music Video Work with several classmates to create a music video using a video camera and a recording of a song that has your teacher's approval. It might be a rock song or a ballad. Listen to the recording several times and discuss what kinds of images would enhance the musical experience. Calculate when and how long each image should appear on-screen. Finally, film the sequences you have decided on and present your music video to the class.

Across the CURRICULUM Activity

History Create a time line that illustrates a limited time period. Investigate that time period, including the period's important artistic movements. Report the effects these movements had on literature, philosophy, theater, fine art, music, and dance. On your time line, list several of the influential writers, composers, choreographers, and artists of the movement and their popular works. To make your time line more interesting, you might want to include pictures of the authors or of their works.



Media and Culture

Culture: shared information, beliefs, and values

*I*n the United States until the opening of the twentieth century, families could largely control the culture their children were exposed to. Now young people have access to electronic media—film, television, and computer technology—that deliver huge amounts of information and entertainment. How does this flood of cultural input affect us—that is, how do the media shape society? On the other hand, how does society shape the media?

THEATER AND CULTURE

A social conscience has always been evident in theater. The earliest Greek tragedies dramatized the retribution of the gods for human arrogance and pride. From medieval dramas, through Restoration comedies, and up to the present, English theater has often ridiculed human weaknesses and society's foolish ways. In the 1850s in the United States, dramatizations of Harriet Beecher Stowe's novel *Uncle Tom's Cabin* brought the horrors of slavery to audience after audience and contributed to the cause of the abolitionist movement. Even musicals have been a force for cultural and social change. *Showboat* (1927), for example, caused audiences to think about family and how we treat one another. More recently, the threat of AIDS was powerfully addressed in the musical drama *Rent* (1996).

Even though theater is live while other media are transmitted, theater affects people's attitudes much less than today's electronic media (film, television, and information technology) do. There are two main reasons for theater's relatively weaker cultural influence. First, a play cannot reach many people at a time. Even *A Chorus Line*, whose fifteen-year Broadway run set a record of 6,137 performances, was seen by only 6.5 million people over fifteen years. In comparison, the television miniseries *Roots* was watched, wholly or partly, by 130 million people in just eight days the first time it was broadcast in the late 1970s. Second, what the audience sees on the stage is only suggestive of reality. A theatergoer must use imagination to supply

the details. By bringing an active mental process to the presentation, the theatergoer becomes involved with the message and shapes it with his or her own sense of reality. As a result, theater lacks the immediacy that is possible with other media; therefore, theater does not make the immediate impression that films, television, and information technology can make.



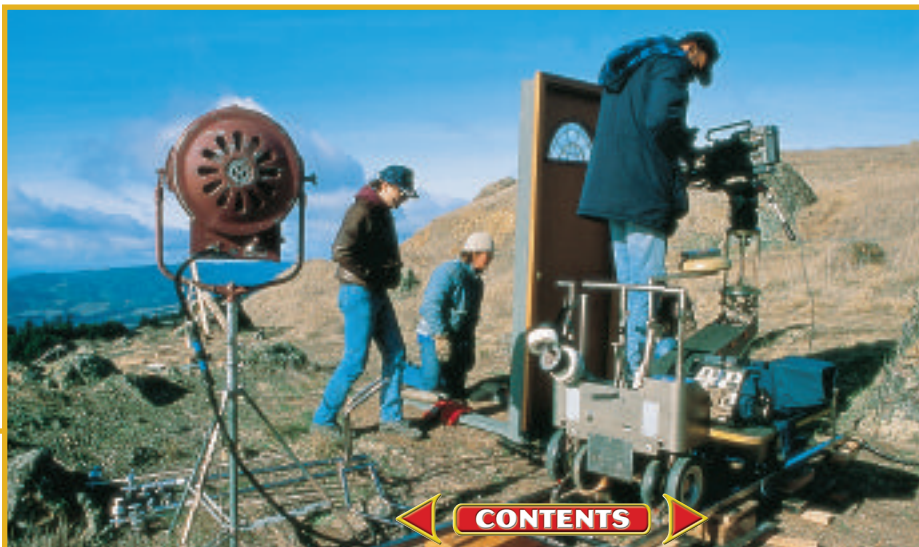
FILM, TELEVISION, AND CULTURE

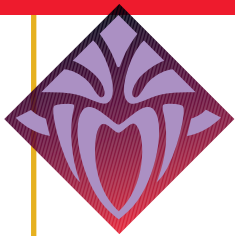
Movies were one of the first media to expose young people to new cultural influences. In the early 1900s, movies and newsreels were weekly fare for many, especially children, who saw on the big screen people, places, and events they might otherwise never have heard of. Influence of the media increased after World War II as television sets were found in more and more homes. Actor and producer Shelley Duvall talks about television's effect on children:

It opened up my eyes to other countries, other cultures. This is *very* important for a child. American kids, in either an urban or a rural location, have generally never been outside their cities. They don't have a clue about what people are like in other cities and countries. The only culture they're exposed to without television is the local one. I think television helps open their eyes to other worlds, and to the possibilities that lie ahead for them as they grow up.

Not only are today's viewers seeing many more hours of television and movies than any previous generation saw, but the experience is more intense now than ever before. Improvements in the arts of makeup,

Instructional television, including documentaries, can turn the entire world into a classroom. This type of programming brings viewers sights and sounds that they might never have the opportunity to experience in person.

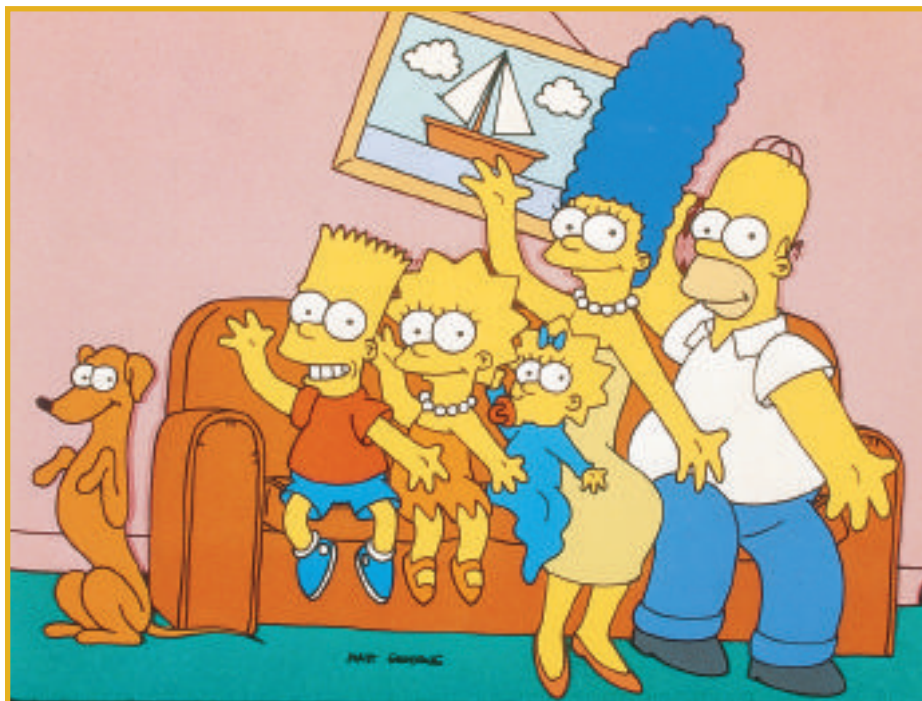




costuming, special effects, cinematography, and editing, among others, have made sure that what we see and hear strikes us as real. We respond emotionally. Bright colors, rapid camera cuts, close-up shots, and advanced special effects and computer-generated images seize our attention and keep it. In fact, we use our experiences with the media—along with our other experiences, of course—to build our knowledge of the world and life. In a way, the media are shaping a world that becomes reality for the viewers, who may have thought they were simply being entertained.

That television can inform and educate is no new discovery. Horace Newcomb, a professor at the University of Texas, said on *60 Minutes* that he judged *Gunsmoke* (1955–1975) to have been “one of the important shows in the history of television.” He went on to explain that “*Gunsmoke* was teaching us about race relations and showing us how to defend human rights, at a time when nobody was doing that overtly.” Television makes possible a more unified society by showing—in both news and entertainment—social change as it occurs and by helping us become familiar with the unfamiliar. When families watch together, they can experience together the educational and informative as well as the entertaining qualities of the medium. Matt Groening, creator of *The Simpsons*, said in a 1990 interview, “[T]hat’s one of the goals of *The Simpsons*: to do a show that each member of the family can get into on his or her own level.”

The exaggerated realism of *The Simpsons* represents a reaction to idealized television families popularized on television in the fifties and sixties.





The more channels there are, however, the more likely it is that something on television will displease someone. How can a person affect the media? Letters, phone calls, and e-mail complaining to the producers or to the governing bodies (such as the Federal Trade Commission) have often resulted in objectionable materials being changed or withdrawn. No television network, sponsor, or movie studio wants to become known for being inaccurate or deceptive, for offending community standards, or for treating any segment of the population unfairly. Individuals can also join advocacy groups, which have a greater ability to support and publish research than individuals have. Petitions and even boycotts have often succeeded in effecting change in the media. On a smaller scale, families can discuss what they see on a television show, advertisement, or movie. By talking about it, families can help young viewers distinguish between the media's message and real life.

INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY AND CULTURE

Today anyone with a computer, a modem, a telephone line, and an access provider can post a question or a response on a bulletin board, partake in a real-time typed conversation, play an interactive game, write to a government official, make a purchase, or look up information. Unlike other media, the online computer is interactive—that is, one can both receive and send, enabling an exchange of ideas. Information technology is changing education, leisure, business, medicine, government, and almost everything else in our culture. Information has become wealth. The role of this electronic medium in United States society is to remove boundaries—physical isolation, lack of access to libraries, lack of education—to allow the user to participate in worldwide events that will build the future.

The real benefit will come for the next generation, those people born into the twenty-first century. Their education will be supplemented by interactive multimedia—television, computers, videodiscs, and more—supplying knowledge from the biggest and most easily accessible information bank ever imagined.