

**SCHEME &
ESTIMATES FOR A
NATIONAL THEATRE**

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Scheme & estimates for a national theatre by William Archer & Granville Barker

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WILLIAM ARCHER & GRANVILLE BARKER

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FOR A

NATIONAL THEATRE

We have in England everything to make us dissatisfied with the chaotic and ineffective condition into which our theatre has fallen. We have the remembrance of better things in the past, and the elements for better things in the future. We have a splendid national drama of the Elizabethan age, and a later drama which has no lack of pieces conspicuous by their stage qualities, their vivacity and their talent, and interesting by their pictures of manners. We have had great actors. We have good actors not a few at the present moment. But we have been unlucky, as we so often are, in the work of organization. . . . It seems to me that every one of us is concerned to find a remedy for this melancholy state of things, and that the pleasure we have had in the visit of the French company [the Comédie Française] is barren, unless it leaves us with the impulse to do so, and with the lesson how alone it can be rationally done. "Forget"—can we not hear these fine artists saying in an undertone to us, amidst their graceful compliments of adieu?—"forget your clap-trap, and believe that the State, the nation in its collective and corporate character, does well to concern itself about an influence so important to national life and manners as the theatre. . . . The people will have the theatre; then make it a good one. . . . The theatre is irresistible; organise the theatre!"

MATTHEW ARNOLD.

SCHEME & ESTIMATES
FOR A
NATIONAL THEATRE

By
WILLIAM ARCHER
and
GRANVILLE BARKER



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HAVING READ AND CAREFULLY
CONSIDERED THIS SCHEME FOR A
NATIONAL THEATRE, WE DESIRE TO
EXPRESS OUR BELIEF THAT SUCH AN
INSTITUTION IS URGENTLY NEEDED,
AND THAT IT COULD IN ALL PROBA-
BILITY BE SUCCESSFULLY ESTAB-
LISHED ON THE GENERAL LINES
HERE INDICATED.

HENRY IRVING.
SQUIRE BANCROFT.
J. M. BARRIE.
HELEN DOYLY CARTE.
JOHN HARE.
HENRY ARTHUR JONES.
A. W. PINERO.

NOTE

THIS book was compiled and privately printed in the year 1904. We need not enter into our reasons for not publishing it at that date: it is sufficient that they have now ceased to operate.

In drawing up the following Estimates we had the assistance of many expert advisers. Most of those leaders of the theatrical profession who signed the declaration on the previous page, not only read the book in proof, but favoured us with many criticisms and suggestions which are embodied in the text as it now stands. Among our other advisers, those to whom we owe special acknowledgments are: Mr. Robert Courtneidge, Miss Edith Craig, Mr. Walter Hann, Mr. Ian Robertson, and Mr. Horace Watson. We are deeply indebted to them for information placed at our disposal; but they are of course in no way responsible for the deductions we have drawn from it, or for the general scheme into which it has been woven.

It is a source of pleasure and pride to us that the list of those who gave their sanction to our scheme should be headed by the name of Sir Henry Irving.

W. A.
H. G. B.

August, 1907.

PREFACE FOR AMERICA

WHEN Mr. Granville Barker and I determined to publish this book, which had been printed for private circulation three years ago, we thought for a moment of preparing an American edition of it, wherein our financial estimates should be stated in dollars instead of in pounds. But we very soon abandoned the idea. Why translate into American currency figures which do not pretend to apply to American conditions? We might, indeed, have called American experts into council, and tried to adjust our estimates to the American scale. But even if we had had time to face such a task, it would scarcely have been worth while; for it would have required far more than a mere correction of figures to fit our scheme with any precision to American needs and opportunities. We determined, then, to leave the book a purely English document, trusting that American readers would make for themselves the necessary adaptations, and appropriate to their own case as many of our suggestions as they "had any use for."

Nevertheless, it may not be out of place for me to indicate briefly those parts of the book which I would, so to speak, underline for America. I do so without any special reference to the schemes and enterprises in the direction of theatrical progress that are already afoot in the United States. Looking at the problem in its widest aspect, I try to point out those features of our Scheme which are, in my judgment, worthy of consideration by all who are interested in the establishment of an artistic theatre in any Anglo-Saxon community.

The American reader may possibly find a stumbling-block at the outset in the name "National Theatre." It has really no importance. The British nation is geographically so much more concentrated than the American nation that such a theatre as is here in view might fairly be called "national" in a sense in which the term could scarcely be applied to any American theatre. If the institution outlined were established in London, its claim to rank as "national" would not