
publishers and filmmakers, touring for our performing arts and art exhibitions, launching and sustaining national associations for our artists. We have, as the writer Margaret Atwood once remarked, "too much geography and not enough demography."

Finally, I must mention another fact of life. That 5,000-mile border is one we share with the greatest arts, entertainment and education factory the world has ever known. No other country can make that boast – except Mexico, which does not, as we do, share a common language. In many ways this bonanza is something to be grateful for: we are among the world's luckiest consumers. But, as Christopher Lasch has pointed out, the freedom to consume is pseudo-freedom. There is no real freedom where the choices do not include your own brand.

Naturally, Canadians have only themselves to blame if they have been less enterprising, less imaginative, less innovative than Americans. But perhaps Americans who can cast their minds back to the early part of this century – when artists and writers in the United States were throwing off the influences of European art and beginning to find their own voices – can appreciate the stage Canadians have been going through in the last few decades vis-à-vis American culture. The concept of "nationalism" has different connotations depending on where one sits. Highly developed societies sometimes use "nationalism" as a dirty word to mock the self-realization of others, while they label the spread of their *own* artistic styles "internationalism." I long ago learned that when we send, for example, le Théâtre du Nouveau Monde to Paris, that is labelled "nationalism"; but when la Comédie Française visits Montreal this is labelled "internationalism." But there can be no real "international" exchange unless there is something to be exchanged. Your true internationalist encourages others to contribute to the exchange. The false internationalist wants to homogenize everything,

reduce art to common forms, judged by a single standard, preferably his own. What is genuinely universal is not the forms of art, nor the standards erected by the leaders of fashion, but the *impulse* to create art – to give something to the world. And you cannot give if you have nothing to give.

I'll now turn to the Canadian experience in theatre, which makes a good exemplar of our particular challenges.

The Invisible Theatre

In most British or American histories of the theatre, even in the chapters on North American theatre, you will find no mention of the Canadian theatre. It does not appear on the historians' radar screens, and must therefore be assumed not to exist. It seems not to have occurred to many of them to check out the screen – even when they found it blipping over the relatively insignificant francophone theatre in New Orleans while ignoring the more salient one in Montreal. This is due, perhaps, to what New York's Louis Kronenberger called the "Mediterranean Complex." "With current high-brow culture," he once wrote in the *Partisan Review*, "there exists a kind of pre-Copernican cosmology in which the world seems more flat than round, with all civilization clustered about a figurative Mediterranean." As recently as 1957, the respected *Oxford Companion to the Theatre* described Canadian dramatic efforts as "probably no more amateur than were the first plays of medieval Europe." In fact, by 1957, our professional theatre was two hundred years old, with a respectable if mercurial record.

But even illusions have their causes – and there are solid reasons for the historic invisibility of Canadian theatre. In the past, Canadian actors went to New York, London or Paris, and, chameleon-like, became American, British or French. Not only "America's Sweetheart," Mary Pickford, was Canadian; so were Mack Sennett, the Warner Brothers and Louis B. Mayer. Before them were stage