

Wolf-Woll

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between - support
was very*

Walf R.

574 Channing Street
Cincinnati, Ohio
September 29, 1947

Mrs. Eleanor Roosevelt
Hyde Park, New York

Dear Mrs. Roosevelt:

I have just read your column in the evening Post, in which you emphasized the importance of a wider provision on the part of each community of opportunities of individual self-expression for children. I had an hour before been contemplating writing you about a children's theater which I am trying to inaugurate as a part of our public recreation program in Cincinnati. You spoke of the community center in relation to the problem of juvenile delinquency. That is the point of view on which I have taken my stand on the matter of the children's theater.

social

Local professional/welfare workers have expressed confidence in the effectiveness of such a program and a genuine interest in its establishment. However, such has been the development of circumstances involved in the execution of my plan that I now find myself in the middle of a somewhat vicious circle which there seems to be no way of breaking except through the enlistment of outside interests in the "cause."

Except for a rough outline of the theory on which the proposal is based, recently published in the Enquirer as a "postscript" to my series of articles on the history of the theater in Cincinnati, I have not been able to get the plan before the public. I feel that public enlightenment on the importance of the issue is a major factor in the promotion of the idea. I have been assured of the co-operation of the local press in that respect when the idea has reached the "news" stage of development.

However, for reasons which in my present position it would not be good psychology to discuss, I have not been able to get the proposal before the Recreation Commission, although Mr. Herb Davis, Superintendent of Public Recreation, in whose hands it has been for several months, admits the "desirability" of such a program and the "possibilities" of the execution of the plan which he encouraged me to develop.

I would appreciate it very deeply if you would read the abridged copy of the proposal which I am sending herewith, and tell me what you think of it. I have just sent Miss Dorothy Thompson a copy, with the same request, and shall send out others tomorrow. The opinions of people like you would do much to strengthen my position. It would establish an opening for local sympathizers with my efforts to come forward publicly with an opinion without creating the impression of attempting to bring pressure to bear upon Mr. Davis. Although my object in writing you is to gain support in the promotion of the children's theater idea, you may trust me not to quote you in the press without your permission or in any other way which may seem to you unethical.

I believe in this idea as I believe in God, and I would not violate any trust placed in me in relation to it. I need every friend I can summon. There is a long road ahead, but I am making progress. I am going look for a word from you.

Yours most sincerely,

Rich. D. Webb

Theory

That in a children's theater devoted to free self-expression in the many arts involved we have the basic principle for the prevention and treatment of those juvenile behavior problems which through the force of their effect upon society are causing so much concern.

We know that most deviations from normal behavior among children are due to a feeling of inferiority or inadequacy for which the child is trying to compensate. In other words, they represent the child's attempt to create for himself a place upon the world stage where he instinctively feels there is a role for him.

The reason that socially maladjusted children constitute the greater number of delinquency cases is that such children have found it necessary to force their way to the center of the stage in order to gain the recognition they have been denied in the play as society has written it.

As an illustration of this point let me quote something Judge Hoffman once said in a speech before the Woman's City Club. It was in 1938. Commenting upon the policy of police at that time "to round up children in much the same manner as hardened criminals," he stated that since its adoption there had been "an increasing tendency on the part of suggestable children with deviations from normal mental and physical health to commit anti-social acts which they thought would attract the attention of the public which they so greatly desired as a means of satisfying their feeling of inferiority."

"Children who have committed serious offenses," he said, "should not be taken around the city in scout cars, accompanied by police and permitted exultantly to point out the localities in which they have committed offenses. Rather, a child should be impressed with the fact that delinquency does not pay, affords no notice, gets one no place."

Judge Hoffman spoke of the influence of crime and gangster pictures as one of the chief causes of juvenile delinquency. However, when we consider the final defeat to which the movie criminal invariably comes, the idea of correcting the child to whom such pictures are suggestive by an explanation of the futility of his behavior falls flat. If he could be thus impressed the movie in which he saw the thing happen, as it were, before his eyes, would accomplish more than any process of reasoning the psychologist could employ.

...of the code on which he bases his claim to recognition.

To explain to such a child that his anti-social behavior won't get him any place in life is like telling the actor who portrays the willian on the stage that his role won't get him any place in the play. To the child the play is the thing and it doesn't matter much to him which role he takes as long as it is a good one from the dramatic point of view.

There is no difference in the little boy of today who holds up a bank, a restaurant or a movie box-office and the little boy of a hundred years ago who shouldered his father's musket and set off to hunt Indians. It makes no more difference to him that he accomplished nothing than it did to the little old timer that he came or was brought back with no dead Indians. He knows, as his young ancestor knew, that the odds are against him. If there were no odds there would be no play. The greater the odds the more dramatic his part. It is his defiance of the odds on which he bases his claim to recognition.

To the underprivileged child defiance is a necessary quality in overcoming his handicaps. The reason he so often finds his example in the gangster or gunman is that he so easily identifies his sense of not "belonging" with the gangster's obvious position with society. In the gangster's defiance of certain rules of conduct which he, the gangster, regards as arbitrarily established by a set-up called society, the boy sees the heroism of his own defiance of the conditions of life which he feels have been wished upon him by he knows not what.

In other words, his anti-social behavior is a dramatization of himself - a dramatization through which he hopes to discover himself as a really colorful and interesting person, like the guy in the picture. In this he is using the normal play instinct of children in an abnormal way, forced as he is by lack of opportunity for true personality development to fall back on it entirely for self-characterization.

In the human need for experience outside and beyond the limitations of the individual which we see first expressed in the imaginative play of children is contained the full meaning and significance of the abstract thing called "theater." We go to the theater because we want to see life in its variety of moods and conditions and meanings - to live for a while the different life through a self-projection in the characters on the stage or screen or perhaps merely to see ourselves objectively.

We hear so much about the bad influence of the theater on society. Society is not a reflection of the theater; the theater is a reflection of society. Those pictures and plays designed to appeal to the ignorant and morally depraved are merely commercial exploitation of ignorance and moral depravity, not creators of these conditions. As G. B. Shaw would say here, the purpose of true drama is to illuminate life. Its whole concern is with character - it may be the character of an individual, a society, or a nation. - as it is shaped by or shapes circumstance.

Taking part in plays or in play production represents subjective experience with a variety of situations on the self-detached basis so important to the socially objective point of view. No other form of leisure time activity carries within itself as a constituent power the very process of developing the sense of judgment or values upon which right behavior depends. Here the compensation for unsatisfied needs so often sought in the pursuit of false goals is real; here the escapes from drab or unhappy situations which day dreaming or other perversions of behavior seem to the victim to provide are turned into channels of self-expression.

If there be any substitute for those harmful movies so widely attended by children it is a program of this type. If there be any means of cultivating a wider taste and appreciation in art upon which good theater depends it is by such an early disciplinary method.

In speaking of a children's theater I mean a theater conducted by children, not a theater exclusively for children. The best plays are those which depend upon the creative imagination of the audience for their carrying power and since the creative level of the child is higher than that of the adult, it is obvious that, although there are plays which are good for adults which are bad for children, there are no plays which are appropriate for children that are not excellent for adults.

As to the type of drama I consider appropriate for children, it can be most anything that children can relate wholesomely or on a constructive basis to their own experience, actual or postulated. Perhaps an "idea" contest in which the children expressed themselves on the kind of things they would like to do would be a good way of determining our choice of plays for them. Anyhow, it wouldn't hurt us to at least test the value of the philosophy contained in Jesus' words, "A little child shall lead them." No telling - we might learn things.

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Outline Of Plan Of Organization

I have been told that I must decide at the outset whether the nature and purpose of the program is to be cultural, functioning along the line of the so-called educational theater; recreational, constituting a form of liesure time activity; or therapeutic, concentrating upon problem children and operating on a basis of clinical psychology. It is my conviction, however, that if the program is to be really effective it must constitute a theater in its own right, incorporating in terms of art the principles of education, social service, therapy, and recreation, yet unidentified with any of these as a field of concentration.

I recommend that the Recreation Commission set up a departmental unit for work along this line through the co-operation of public, parochial, and private schools, and appropriately designated social and philanthropic organizations and agencies. There are many activities carried on in the field of education and civic and social welfare which could at once be co-ordinated in the formulation of a tentative plan of organization.

I believe that the richness, variety, and broad inclusiveness of such a centralization of activities would accomplish much toward the solution of the problem as to how to attract those loose-ends of juvenile and adolescent society who refuse to identify themselves with the popularly designated "character building" programs. I believe that the very factors which make it psychologically impossible to organize girls' clubs on the basis on which The Boys Clubs Of Cincinnati are so effectively organized are those which explain the attractiveness of the theater program to girls.

Let us call the program The Young Peoples Theater Guild and each member school and group of young people a chapter. A boy or girl who is a member of organized groups outside school shall be called a free lancer whose obligation it will be to support the interests of those chapters in which he holds "free" membership by attendance to all their performances and by any contribution of service which he may be called upon to render in exchange for the broader opportunity of participation in their separate activities. Activities shall cover the range of the professional theater to the extent to which the young people are capable of contributing.

Each chapter shall pledge itself to produce at least one play or other type of entertainment each season and to attend in a body at least one performance of another chapter each season. All might plan their activities to lead up to one grand performance to be staged at Music Hall.

I suggest an age limit of eighteen or twenty years for participation, except in the instance of professional actors who may be called upon or are willing to volunteer their services to the effective carrying out of the program.

Member service organizations and agencies shall be appropriately designated as sponsors. Any such group may specify certain chapters as the objects of its affection, but all shall be pledged to support and promote the interests of the whole program. The Recreation Commission shall have full control in the regulation of policy and activities.

Plan For Financing

The cost of the program will depend entirely upon its scope and objectives, factors which can be determined only by the response of those groups upon whose co-operation the organization of the program depends. I herewith submit a plan through which the program, on the basis of the method of organization I propose, can finance itself.

I suggest the establishment of a required entrance fee for each chapter of \$200, in exchange for which an unlimited number of season's tickets with a value of \$2.00 each shall be issued. The entrance fee may be paid by the chapter itself or by any one of the sponsor groups, each of which may enter as many chapters as it chooses. Pledges for the amount of the entrance fee shall be accepted from those chapters (high schools or other teen age groups) who wish to pay their own fee but are unable to advance it.

Any amount collected in the sale of tickets in excess of the entrance fee shall represent profit to be used by the group in accordance with its own pre-established plan. The purpose for which profits are to be used shall be approved by the Recreation Commission when the entrance fee is paid or the pledge taken.

No person under high school age may sell tickets and tickets may be sold only to persons over eighteen years of age. All persons under eighteen years of age shall be admitted to any and all performances free. They need not be residents of Cincinnati or Hamilton County. The patronage of "outsiders" or visitors shall be solicited.

A season's ticket shall entitle the holder to any and all performances given by the Young Peoples Theater Guild. Free tickets shall be issued to public dependents by social welfare agencies.

(To Mrs. Roosevelt: Realizing the largeness of the work involved in the organization of such a program I have volunteered my services to that purpose free.)



GOVERNMENT
OF THE
GRAND DUCHY OF LUXEMBOURG

441 Lexington Avenue, New York 17, NY.
Telephone: MU 5-2621 or MU 6-1990

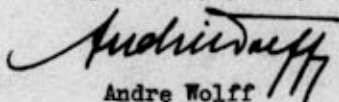
April 22, 1947

Mrs. Eleanor Roosevelt
29 Washington Square West
New York 11, N. Y.

My dear Mrs. Roosevelt,

I have the honor to acknowledge
your letter of April 17th and thank you for your sug-
gestion that I see Mr. Henry Morgenthau. I shall
get in touch with him.

Respectfully yours,



Andre Wolff

AW:lb

R. Wolff
[Wolff, A.]

Shank's
There is a JDR
Memorial Foundation &
which Mr. Henry Magenthan
is chairman. Perhaps
you would like to talk
to him -

PERSONAL



GOVERNMENT
OF THE
GRAND DUCHY OF LUXEMBOURG

441 Lexington Avenue, New York 17 N. Y.
Telephone: MU 5-2621 or MU 6-1990

Mrs. Eleanor Roosevelt
14 Washington Square
New York, N. Y.

My dear Mrs. Roosevelt:

Two years have elapsed since the passing of the late President Franklin Delano Roosevelt, and a great many people of all nations feel his absence today as much as ever.

Last week my family and I visited the grave of your dear husband in Hyde Park. Those moments revived again in our thoughts the greatness of human character Franklin D. Roosevelt has shown in his work throughout his whole life.

In all the countries who have fought to throw off their chains of slavery, in all the nations who have joined the fighting forces to liberate the world from fear of oppression, Franklin D. Roosevelt is considered - and rightly so - the man who, from the first day of enemy aggression, gave new hope to the world for a victory of men of good will.

Today I am convinced that all these nations who are members of the United Nations would like to memorialize the late President Franklin D. Roosevelt's work in a humble way to express their gratitude. I believe that a society with the aim to keep alive your late husband's achievements would meet with great response in all countries. This society could establish libraries and organize lectures, presenting the humanitarian democratic concepts which were so predominant in the late President's mind. Schools and homes, workers' organizations, town meetings and public assemblies, could all be channels to reach the people.

This Franklin Delano Roosevelt Society might find its foundation here in the United States by appealing to friends who would like to join in such an educational humanitarian movement. I am asking the advice of a few close friends and collaborators of the late President, and I should be very grateful indeed if you could let me have your opinion on this proposed plan.

With many thanks, I am,

Respectfully yours,

Andre Wolf

AW:lb

Handwritten notes:
This is for you
might like to see
blue chairman
April 1947
Frank



Met vreugde geven wij
kennis van de geboorte van
ons zoontje en broertje

Franklin Delano

J. WOLTERS

J. G. WOLTERS.

STELLINGWERF

PIET

LEEWARDEN, 24 Aug. 1946

Vredeman de Vriesstr. 6

Tijdelijk: Nieuwe Schrans 26



~~February~~ 1947.
January 1948

Franklin Delano Wolters
born 24-P-46

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