

**A NATIONAL  
THEATRE, SCHEME  
& ESTIMATES**

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A national theatre, scheme & estimates by William Archer & H. Granville Barker

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**WILLIAM ARCHER & H. GRANVILLE BARKER**

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*We live 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 organisation. . . . 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-net, 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.

A NATIONAL THEATRE  
SCHEME & ESTIMATES

BY  
WILLIAM ARCHER  
AND  
H. GRANVILLE BARKER



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THE NATIONAL ARCHIVES  
COLLECTIONS

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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 D'OVLY CARTE.*  
*JOHN HARE.*  
*HENRY ARTHUR JONES.*  
*A. W. PINERO.*

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## 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

IN THE FORM OF A LETTER FROM ONE AUTHOR  
TO THE OTHER.

MY DEAR ARCHER,

You want a preface from me—do you?—to say how far the three years' experience of theatre management through which I have passed, since this unofficial blue-book was written and printed, has altered, as far as I am concerned, the views expressed in it. It hasn't really altered them at all. The need for a repertory theatre remains the same: no less, and it could not well be greater. But I cannot help thinking that the public mind, and especially the mind of the theatrical public, has developed a little, and that therefore the possibilities of the project are somewhat differently balanced from what they were when we wrote. Moreover, while experience has not altered my views, it has diversified them; so that there are one or two amendments to our scheme which I would like to suggest. If you do not agree with them, write another preface still to say so. It would only bring the number up to four.

I could chip here and there at our piles of figures, but any one is welcome to do that. Except in one or two instances, their increase or decrease will ultimately depend upon the personality of the theatre's administration.

I am inclined to think, though, that our estimate for actors' salaries may have been invalidated since we made it

by the increasing effect of what is called the American Invasion. The methods of syndicate and trust have, you know, brought about a breakback competition for the limited amount of assured talent which London possesses, of which the actors included in that limitation have not been slow to take advantage. Small blame to them! At least I can account in no other way for the great forcing-up of salaries that has been going on for some years now. The more a manager speculates, the more his resources of capital enable him to juggle with the fate of companies and plays, the more is the actor forced into speculation, gambling as he does only with his own personality, now more in demand, now less, and with so little assurance of stability. It will need the establishment, not of one permanent repertory theatre, but of many, and the operation of several years, to steady and correct this debauched market. Meanwhile the imaginary promoters of such a scheme as ours should be made to face present conditions. If any one supposes that these conditions are even to the material advantage of the actor who may seem to be making hay while the sun of speculation shines, let us refer such an apostle of the Happy-go-lucky to our argument upon the point in Section III. The difference to prepare for would be found more in the salaries of actresses than of actors; and not at the head or tail of our list, but in the middle, where the artistic safety of such a company as this would especially lie, where absolute competence could least afford to be jeopardised.

I think we should have allowed a definite margin to cover the cost of artistic experiment, which should certainly be demanded of such a theatre. I don't refer so much to the production of experimental plays as to experimental