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ARTICLE

Jacques Copeau's "The Spirit in the Little Theatre": Contexts and Texts

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The story of influential French stage director Jacques Copeau's 1917–19 residency in New York City was documented at the time by Copeau himself and subsequently analyzed by Copeau scholars.[1] Copeau (1879–1949) is remembered today for his innovative, experimental theatre work in the early twentieth century; he developed core practices that became foundational for modernist stage artistry, including mime and physical theatre as well as devised theatre techniques.[2] In 1913, he established his Théâtre du Vieux-Colombier in Paris, breaking away from traditional ornate design practices and envisioning an ensemble of actors trained in methods comparable to those used by Konstantin Stanislavsky, although Copeau knew comparatively little of his techniques at this time.[3] Copeau's "'attempt at dramatic renovation'"[4] included staging plays to be performed in repertory and maintaining modest budgets and ticket prices to secure financial stability. In these and other regards, his vision paralleled those of other modernist colleagues not only in Europe, but also in the United States, where the Little Theatre movement was already underway,[5] although Copeau similarly had little knowledge of US theatre at this early moment.

Copeau's initial successes with his new theatre company in Paris secured the favor of the French government, and in the summer of 1916, with World War I raging in Europe, the French government asked Copeau to travel to the United States to undertake artistic diplomacy—to help bolster positive attitudes toward France. Both French and German cultures and communities were already established in the United States, and French leaders clearly wanted America to join the Allies' side in the escalating conflict with Germany and the Central Powers. Copeau had initially hoped to bring his company from the Théâtre du Vieux-Colombier with him to perform as part of this remit, but the government would not release his actors from military service. Copeau agreed instead to a lecture and reading tour, which commenced shortly after his arrival in New York at

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the end of January 1917 and continued into early June of that year. The success of the tour (and of Copeau's ability to charm and impress wealthy New York arts patrons, with whom he spent considerable time) led directly to Copeau's being offered the directorship of New York's Théâtre Français, which he renamed the Théâtre du Vieux-Colombier in New York; to the French government's granting permission for some of his actors to join Copeau in the United States; and to two seasons (1917–18, 1918–19) of Copeau-directed French theatre in New York.[6]

Of the research in English on this short period in the director's career, Copeau scholar Norman H. Paul's offers the most detailed analysis of Copeau's lecture tour and his initial impressions of New York theatre. Paul is also clear, however, that his primary interest lies in "the effect of the American theatre on Copeau,"[7] rather than in Copeau's impact on US theatre. Yet between these neatly opposed outcomes of the residency, questions remain about the immediate contexts informing Copeau's lectures and his related, published observations on the American stage.[8] We know that Copeau initially planned to give six lectures in French in New York; he was also invited to Harvard University to lecture to students in George Pierce Baker's 47 Workshop, and to speak at Columbia University.[9] Drawing on Copeau's journal entries and his unpublished papers, Paul also briefly discusses another lecture that Copeau was invited to present several months into his time in New York: his first lecture in English, "The Spirit in the Little Theatre," delivered as part of the Washington Square Players' lecture series at the Comedy Theatre on 20 April 1917.[10] Players' historian Eugene M. Wank describes the company's securing Copeau for this event as a "coup,"[11] although he provides no details of the lecture itself or how it came about. Paul quotes only a few lines from the lecture, explaining that the English version remained (as of 1977) in the private collection of Copeau's daughter, Mme Marie-Hélène Dasté. He therefore refers his readers to a French version of the speech, published after Copeau's death, in a 1954 special issue of the *Cahiers de la Compagnie Madeleine Renaud–Jean-Louis Barrault* on "Le Petit Théâtre" ("The Little Theatre").[12]

These tantalizing fragments of information about Copeau's speech for the Players—his first that would have been linguistically accessible to a wider New York audience—raise questions about the back story to the lecture and its relationship to the 1954 published version. What exactly does Copeau have to say to his Washington Square Players audience, given this pioneering young company's aspirations and accomplishments to date as part of the Little Theatre movement in America?

Fortunately, Mme Dasté subsequently donated her father's papers to the Bibliothèque nationale de France (BnF), where the original manuscripts of Copeau's speech, in both French and English, now reside. With the permission of the BnF, Copeau's speech to the Washington Square Players appears here for the first time in its original English version. In the discussion that follows, we annotate elements of Copeau's remarks that may merit elaboration or clarification. We also offer some initial analysis of the speech in the context of the modernist theatre that Copeau sees himself and perhaps also these New York colleagues attempting to craft. Although at the time he gave the 20 April speech Copeau's exposure to US theatre was limited, as Paul notes, "Copeau quickly observed that there existed [in the American theatre] a resemblance to the situation he had been so vigorously

criticizing for many years in prewar Paris."[13] Copeau proposes an accordance with his New York audience, inviting agreement as he describes to them "our mutual indignation"[14] with the commercial theatre—a shared principle he suggests links their artistic undertakings. In other words, Copeau may have considered his remarks here as relevant to a French audience as well as to his US audience and, indeed, to dramatic artists around the world. ("This spirit," Copeau remarks, "has spread all over the world" [SLT, 3].) His talk thus remains historically valuable in documenting what, in that moment, he sees as the present degraded state of theatre and its future ideal, and how he conceptualizes the passage from the former to the latter, as well as the work incumbent on dramatic artists to make that happen. Copeau's lecture emerges as a kind of intercultural bridge—a set of observations and visionary recommendations that link his initial thoughts on the New York experimental theatre he has recently seen with his own still-evolving concepts of the modernist stage.

Copeau clearly perceives modernist energies in the Little Theatre movement, yet he also strikes a warning note (with political undertones) about modernist artistry that celebrates its own innovation, rather than supports holistic, collaborative theatricality. He does so through a markedly prophetic mode: that is, his address is oriented toward a future that will reclaim the former heights of the stage—especially as reflected stylistically by the commedia dell'arte and Molière.[15] The anticipatory dimension of his speech allows him to navigate characteristically modernist dilemmas: on the one hand, the demands of the market on the integrity of art, and on the other hand, the desire for new, authentic modes of expression when style becomes a rapidly reproducible, and thus imitable, procedure. Copeau's rhetoric bisects these contradictions, finding their corrupted outcomes (commercial theatre and its tawdry style of *cabotinage,* discussed below) in the present, marked with metaphors of death, disease, and plague, while projecting their proper answer in the future, countering the moribund language of the present with the promise of future fertility, birth, and life. We hasten to add that there remains more work to be done, especially in the Copeau archive at the BnF[16] and in the archives of those figures central to the Washington Square Players[17] to search for more information on the background to this speech and its place in the thinking, writing, and stage artistry of both Copeau and the Players.

During his initial months in New York, Copeau attended, usually in the company of arts patrons or socialites, a series of performances that provided him with the rapid, if still only partial, exposure to current US stage artistry that informed his 20 April speech. Copeau's *Journal* documents his attendance at a few commercial theatre productions, some vaudeville, the opera, and four Little Theatre performances.[18] Prominent among the New York luminaries in whose orbit Copeau circulated was Otto Kahn (1867–1934), a wealthy financier who became one of America's cultural leaders through his philanthropic support of the Metropolitan Opera. Kahn had first encountered and been impressed by Copeau's artistry in Paris in 1913,[19] and spearheaded Copeau's appointment as Director of the Théâtre Français; he was also a major investor in the Washington Square Players.[20] Kahn believed deeply not only in the social value of art "'as the strong, educational, social and moral factor which it is'" but also in America's need for "'institutions to train and guide aright the amazing quantity of all kinds

of artistic talent which is latent among the people of our country.'"[21] Kahn no doubt knew of Copeau's similarly fervid commitment to training artists, reflected in his 1913 creation of the school attached to the Vieux-Colombier,[22] and to "the challenging, the innovative, the experimental" artistry that could impact a nation.[23] Kahn may have intuited what Kimberly Jannarone has called Copeau's "sense of a sacred mission involved in creating theater."[24] As Kahn had facilitated the use of Winthrop Ames's Little Theatre for Copeau's March lecture series,[25] it seems plausible that Kahn, recognizing commonalities of artistic goals and predilections for French artistry, may also have helped foster the connection between Copeau and the Washington Square Players. Kahn may even have encouraged the French director to provide some guidance to the young group, especially as the Players had also recently decided to create a school for actors and were including a number of French plays (notably, in the context of the invitation, in founding Players' member Philip Moeller's English translations) in their repertoire.[26]

In his private *Journal*, where Copeau documented his frank opinions of individuals and arts events, he records his first visit to see the Washington Square Players on 9 February, dismissing three of the four offerings on the bill as "vulgaires ou sans intérêt"[27] ("vulgar or without interest"). On 31 March he attends their production of Molière's *Sganarelle; ou, Le Cocu Imaginaire*, which they titled simply *Sganarelle*, in an English translation by Moeller. Copeau deems the Molière "absolument massacré" ("absolutely massacred") by the Players.[28] The disjunction between Copeau's uncensored impressions in the journal and his jocular praise in the speech, in which he announces that "[t]hese Washington Square Players are horrible people. They succeed in everything they undertake" (SLT, 1), indicates, of course, his understanding of invited speaker etiquette. But it may also signal Copeau's rhetorical strategy as he works to foster a sense of his regard for and a shared mission with their stage artistry that then allows for subtle critique and warning, as well as guidance and motivation for the future, to emerge.

The opening of the lecture offers helpful background details: Moeller apparently extended the invitation on behalf of the Players, but clearly insisted that the lecture needed to be in English to be accessible to their audience ("the public"). This requirement allows Copeau to be self-effacing on the level of language ("I fear to be understood by no one") and then on the level of content: he will not make sweeping pronouncements (be "more ambitious" in the scope of his remarks) on the state of the contemporary theatre. Instead, he tells them he will comment on what he and his audience both know: "that there exists a new spirit in the theatre" (SLT, 2). He describes this spirit as being "of love and of liberty" (perhaps both artistic and political), desiring "to breathe into the theatre a new soul, to purify its morals, to review [*renouveler*] it from top to bottom" (SLT, 3). The restraint and modesty Copeau exercises in his opening reflect his own uneasy position, not only of lecturing in English, but of describing something in process, an ongoing effort against commercialized theatre and toward the recuperation of the stage's former grandeur. In refraining from speaking about a movement or school, and instead describing an ethos, Copeau's speech employs a rhetoric of anticipation, one that emphasizes work in the present to undo theatre's commercialism and *cabotinage*; this undoing will then prepare the way for theatre's future artists. But first,

he describes the circumstances of this new spirit—an international phenomenon turning away from the established theatre of the day.

By his appeal to the new spirit in the theatre, Copeau connects what he wants the Players to believe he already knows about their origins and their work not only with his own company's, but also with a theatrical movement that he believes is occurring simultaneously, yet independently, in a number of geographical locations.[29] Around the world, dramatic artists find themselves and their art besieged by moribund forces, the "plagues" of commercialism and *cabotinage*: "You know, ladies and gentlemen," Copeau says, "the meaning of the word commercialism" (SLT, 7). However, Copeau spends much time defining *cabotinage*. At least for the topic of his speech, the new spirit of theatre, *cabotinage* poses the greater challenge—a condition that threatens to calcify the spirit of love and liberty into technique and routine. He describes this tawdry acting, writing, and producing of the day as more than bad taste. It is, rather, a "malady of insincerity." A malady, moreover, of which all are sick: "Everybody complains of *cabotinage*, and yet everybody is more or less *cabotin*" (SLT, 8). Yet, if everyone is sick from the plague of *cabotinage*, how can the space of the Little Theatres remain pure and exceptional to commercial theatre? "We hardly know what [*cabotinage*] is," Copeau says, "so thoroughly are we saturated and infected by this malady" (SLT, 8). With the all-pervasive plagues of commercialism and *cabotinage*, the means of realizing a renewal of the theatre remain opaque, and the amateurs that Copeau describes are not immune—perhaps especially the Washington Square Players leadership, already eager to achieve professional status.[30]

The dramatic author, Copeau further warns, "has witnessed the defeat of the comrades of his youth, one after the other won over by the demands of the commercial theatre." The actor, similarly, "has been condemned to the gallows of the theatre . . . in a word, all that we describe in French as *cabotinage*" (SLT, 5–6). Malady, plague, gallows—the present state of the stage is sick, if not dead. Copeau describes an international phenomenon in which actors and playwrights, in the moribund status quo of the popular stage, are turning away from the commercial theatre, finding a privileged space for themselves to realize the first fruits of their labor, separate from the thrall of profit and *cabotinage*.

> Newcomers are not clambering on the old stage and seeking to suit it to their demands. They do not even wish to destroy it. They do not touch it, but turn away with disdain and disgust. They modestly search aside, far from the theatrical fair, a small corner quite intact and pure where, with their unsoiled hands, and by the sweat of their brow, they may construct a new abode of their own, worthy of sheltering their dream. (SLT, 3–4).

In such newcomers—untutored talent, unsullied by professionalization and without the disease of *cabotinage*, Copeau finds hope. This is a movement of visionary "amateurs," and Copeau explains how such companies begin, setting a generic scene that resembles that of Stanislavsky and Nemirovich-Danchenko's first marathon meeting. In positioning the jaded, commercial theatre against this emerging modernist artistry, he focuses on, and contrasts, the contributions of actors, playwrights, and designers in each arena, demonstrating the pitfalls of commercialism

and the purity of the "new abode," "far from the theatrical fair," where the "pioneers" of this new movement congregate. Newcomers are to be protected and cultivated within these spaces, working, as they are, "in a state of complete transition" between the present plagues of theatre and a future realization of drama's artistic promise (SLT, 2). The labor of such newcomers and amateurs sits between the moribund present and the promise of a renewed future. Yet the saturation of theatre with commercialism and *cabotinage* is so complete that Copeau cautions against prescriptions of any sort: not only the prevailing mode of theatrical refinement associated with Broadway but, more radically, any refinement that would equate to professionalization or conformity to the ruling tastes of the day.

Ruling out the contrivance of yet another stylistic intervention, which would invariably become its own form of *cabotinage*, Copeau suggests that the answer to these plagues is the cultivation of authenticity over technical refinement. Suspended between the moribund present and the promise of a vital future, the Little Theatres, in the anticipation of renewal, are tasked at that moment with deprogramming *cabotinage*—or, as Copeau says, "we must wash away all the smudges of the theatre, and free it of its habits" (SLT, 9). Such a lack of refinement will clear the way for human expression; he will thus caution against any concrete achievement or positive aesthetic model. Even his title within the manuscript text, "the spirit in the little theatre," is a more modest, less definite alternative to other possible titles he considered, such as "the theatre of today" or "the new art of the theatre" (SLT, 2). Spirit, instead, emphasizes an internal life within theatre, rather than a concrete state. In a word, the reach of the plagues of the theatre calls for caution, lest the Little Theatres, ironically, become their own sort of *cabotinage*, a calculated and refined simplicity that Copeau puppets: "'See, see how simple I am![']" (SLT, 15). The value of the Little Theatre movement, then, is cast oppositionally: against refinement, against commercialization, the Little Theatres are spaces of refuge, as of yet incapable of a positive, concrete vision of the future. "You must not hasten to become 'a real theatre,'" Copeau warns his Washington Square Players audience, and perhaps himself, urging a suspicion for the present and an openness to the future (SLT, 12). Copeau's own situation, his own embeddedness in the diseased present, means a degree of cloudiness to the future renewal of theatre.

In a typically prophetic fashion, while the aesthetic form of the future remains unclear—undecided, even—it will be the vital, living counterpart to the moribund present. However, that Copeau cannot prescribe how to realize the new spirit of theatre does not mean it cannot manifest; rather, in the absence of technique, authenticity can express itself. Copeau's comments on stylistic refinement and caution against any concrete aesthetic model come from his experience, not only of commercial theatre, but of the Little Theatres as well: The "falseness," "weakness," and "affectation" of performances by *cabotin* actors stand in opposition to the "deep intelligence," "spirituality," and, above all, "simplicity" of acting that Copeau champions. He suggests that the famous Italian actress Eleanora Duse (1858–1924) exemplifies these laudable qualities,[31] but he also singles out some work by an actress he has recently seen at "one of your little theatres" that he found very moving. In his lecture, he identifies neither the actress nor the theatre, but his *Journal* reveals that he is referencing the performance by Susan Glaspell in her play *The People*, produced by the Provincetown Players in March 2017.[32] In

reading his comments in the lecture, one might be tempted to think that Copeau is damning her with faint praise, but in the context of his rejection of artificial acting styles in the commercial theatre, the terms he uses to describe Glaspell's work take on a different valence. By saying that she "lacked technique," "did not know how to walk on the stage," and "did not know how to accompany her words by gestures appropriate to the action and dialogue," he appears to be speaking at once of the routinized physical and vocal performance tropes one sees in the professional theatre and the new performance modes that will develop as part of this emerging artistry. He cautions: "Distrust the friend who advises you . . . to '[a]chieve . . . a little more technique'" (SLT, 13). By displaying none of these tendencies, and by using movement only sparingly and simply, Glaspell profoundly affected Copeau. He ends the *Journal* entry on her performance by musing, "Never have I so well understood . . . how important it is to renounce the current technique of theatre, even if it were at the price of a long period of new trials and errors."[33]

These remarks on acting are significant, not only as examples of what the "new spirit" may achieve, but also, more pointedly, in the specific context of the Washington Square Players' artistry. As Wank acknowledges, drawing on the otherwise positive reviews of their initial seasons, "the Players were developing well in every respect except acting,"[34] and Copeau seems to have been using the Glaspell example as diplomatically as possible to illustrate where the work of their actors—and perhaps also the acting training in their school—needed to go.

For Copeau, there is a direct relationship between the desirable simplicity and sincerity of a Little Theatre company's acting—its artists' "spirit of abnegation, of discipline, of fervor"—and its ability "to prepare a home for the chef d'oeuvres of tomorrow . . . a great dramatic dawn" (SLT, 12). Disciplined, passionate dramatic work is the precondition for a future life of the theatre, the counterpoint to the moribund present. Fundamentally anticipatory, the modern theatre he envisions must create "the most favourable conditions to the birth of dramatic works, to the formation and development of the dramatic author. All the scattered efforts are held out to the birth of this hero of the future." This hero's "personality will be an answer to all" (SLT, 16–17). Copeau acknowledges that "receiving and staging dramatic works submitted from outside" can form part of the repertoire, but that the creation of new work by a company that reflects "the invisible presence of the poet's soul" sets it apart "in great theatrical epochs." While Copeau cannot say what form the renewal of the theatre will take, he constructs a series of oppositions that are to play across the present and the future: the dead present will give way to a living future, what were once "dispersed . . . will find again their unity" (SLT, 17). Indeed, through the figure of the future who will ultimately bring this unity about, Copeau may be constructing his own opposition, too: as a *cabotin*, he does not profane the future by attempting to provide his own answer to the "problems of the theatre." Rather, the task of those in the present is to prepare the way for that living, unified future, in which "these problems will no longer exist" (SLT, 17). Only in the future will the anticipatory spirit of the Little Theatres be rewarded.

This, too, may constitute a subtle message to the Players, whose goal was, according to Wank, to stage "[s]ignificant European writers and promising American writers neglected by the other commercial managers in New York."[35]

Yet the works by their own company members that they premiered had not been their most successful offerings, which may have prompted Copeau to emphasize the importance of nurturing new writing. As Wank notes, theirs "was not a playwright's theatre,"[36] and the poor reception of new works they presented may have contributed to the company's dissolution in 1918.

In addition to cautioning the Little Theatres against seeking to hasten the future life of theatre, Copeau's other strong warning to the Players involved "the malady of the *mise-en-scène*" (SLT, 13). Perhaps because the United States had entered the war on the side of the Allies just days earlier,[37] he felt he could be pointedly critical of Germany, albeit maintaining a theatrical focus: "The development of the art of producing as an art in itself, as a scenic elaboration, such as we have seen, for instance, in Germany for the last fifteen to twenty years, is morbid." He rejects the "synthetic and very German" faux "simplicity" he sees in some contemporary design, calling it "a new form of *cabotinage*" that must be resisted (SLT, 14). Copeau does not mention any of the Little Theatre designs he had seen, or the innovations of American designers, such as Robert Edmond Jones, in the context of the modernist advances he champions. But, in an article he published soon after giving this lecture, he does openly criticize Richard Ordynski and Joseph Urban's designs at the Bandbox Theatre for calling attention to themselves in the same mode he disparages in his lecture.[38] Wank notes that the Players' designs "must be seen in the perspective of contemporary practice" in Europe. He cites critics' singling out of their designers' work as their strongest artistic advance, reflecting an "'[a]rt for art's sake'" sensibility[39] that Copeau, however, may well have perceived with concern. Like Edward Gordon Craig and Adolphe Appia, Copeau embraced modernist concepts of the director. But, as this lecture makes clear, design in Copeau's modernist theatre must support the truthful "freshness" of this new spirit through the work of the dramatist and the actor. Design innovation on its own "is but a symptom of its interior poverty" (SLT, 18).

The themes of a present death and the future reclamation of life in Copeau's "The Spirit in the Little Theatre" suggest how he is navigating the dilemmas facing the dramatic arts of his day: the encroachment of commercial interests on artistic integrity and the desire for authentic aesthetic expression. Copeau's speech invites dialogue with the politics of theatre. Although, as he says, "the actual [*actuel*—current] movement has perhaps more tendency to tradition than revolution" (SLT, 3), his temporal argument of the eventual reclamation of the former heights of theatre in the age of Molière is one solution to the contradictions that beset the modern artist—"our mutual indignation" (SLT, 6). Copeau concludes with sharing his eagerness to work with them in the upcoming season, a sentiment that resonates with the spirit his speech describes: beyond *cabotinage*, aside from the clamor of commercial theatre, a devotion to the work of the dramatic arts.

In early 1919, as the Théâtre du Vieux-Colombier in New York was presenting its final season, theatre critic Samuel A. Eliot, Jr. published in *Theatre Arts Magazine* an analysis of Copeau's productions to date and his hopes for the lasting impact Copeau's presence and artistry would have on the American theatre. For Eliot,

> It is . . . in the domain of "pure theatre" that Copeau's special province lies and the French Theatre's greatest influence must be felt. . . . [T]he Vieux Colombier is

> pioneering and experimenting with a definite goal in mind . . . the elaboration of a new theatre and the evocation of a new drama: more especially the popularization of a simplified, stylized, "presentational" method of staging, and the encouragement of playwrights who wish to create for such a stage. . . . A new, imaginative or scrupulously selective and theatric drama must be brought into being. . . . [W]e in Copeau's footsteps must get ready and prepare *our* theatres to "present" vividly, simply, with style and with art. . . . Le Théâtre du Vieux Colombier is . . . the forebear of many English-speaking theatres inspired with the same purposes, directed (we can only hope with equal genius) toward the same ultimate goal.[40]

Copeau's lecture helped establish the foundation for his American critics and theatre colleagues to perceive the cogency and necessity of such a vision for a vital, modernist stage.

Yet a few mysteries remain that we acknowledge: the sixteen-page archival manuscript of the lecture in French is assumed to be in Copeau's handwriting. The nineteen-page English manuscript version, however, reflects the involvement of multiple translators and/or scribes. Judging by the French rendition, the English text proceeds in Copeau's hand until page eight, and then switches to typed text with handwritten emendations, some of which do not appear to be by Copeau, whereas others are. Then, on page fifteen, what is assumed to be Copeau's writing resumes for half a page until a different hand, in cursive, continues for one page. Copeau's hand appears to finish from there, to page nineteen. Given the presence of various handwritten emendations on the typed section, it seems reasonable to speculate that someone other than, or in addition to, Copeau worked on this section. The appearance of the short section in still other handwriting indicates that the English version must have been in some way(s) a collaborative undertaking. Content in Copeau's *Journal* suggests that he had some knowledge of English, but it is impossible to tell the exact extent of his English facility. There is no indication on the manuscript of who assisted Copeau with the translation, however. Whoever aided in drafting the English version of Copeau's speech, and the extent of their involvement, may be revealed with further archival research.

Copeau prefaced his talk with his hesitancy to speak, much less in English. And while the lecture reflects some vestiges of French phrasings, his evocation of the renewal of the stage is admirably clear. At some points in the text, however, there may arise equivocations from Copeau's language. In particular, readers should be aware of the occasional false friends in the text, how he translates some of the French metaphors into English, as well as some distinctions of wording between French and English versions that shift an understanding of the text. The false friends (e.g., "I assisted at a performance . . ." (SLT, 10), where *assister à* means to attend, or to be present) are annotated in the English text.

Certain metaphors in the French tighten Copeau's thematic focus on life, death, and renewal: the English version reads, "The question is to breathe into the theatre a new soul, to purify its morals, to review it from top to bottom" (SLT, 3). The French manuscript, on the other hand, reads, "de le renouveler de fond en comble," that is, *to renew it* from top to bottom (SLT [Fr.], 2). In addition, Copeau claims that "Our duty is to prepare the future, to prepare a home for the chef

d'oeuvres of tomorrow, to make possible a great dramatic dawn" (SLT, 12). The English lecture translates as "a great dramatic dawn" the French phrase "une grande éclosion dramatique" (SLT [Fr.], 10). *Éclosion*, which refers to a hatching, birth, or blooming, plays with his metaphors of life and death and, more specifically, anticipates his later advice: "Give yourself time to prepare the ground, to till it, to fertilize it, so that a few plants of slow and difficult germination may take root" (SLT, 13). The function of the Little Theatre takes on a different shade of meaning in the French as well: where Copeau writes in English that the duty of the Little Theatres is "to prepare a home" for future masterpieces, the French reads "d'offrir une lieu d'asile"—to offer a place of asylum, thus emphasizing (with an undeniably political connotation) the need for Little Theatres to provide refuge, to serve a protective function, for the future from the maladies of theatre (SLT [Fr.], 10).

Other translations are more opaque, and readers of the original English may be surprised at some of the choices Copeau makes, when compared to the French manuscript or the published version: the characterization of the amateurs of the Little Theatre movement is, in the French, "une petite troupe d'amateurs, artistes, artisans, gens du peuple et de la petite bourgeoisie" ("a little troupe of amateurs, artists, artisans, common and petty bourgeois people") (SLT [Fr.], 3; SLT, 5). When both "the people" as a populist designation and "petty bourgeoisie" are available in English, Copeau's choice of "labourers and workmen" in the English is worth noting (SLT, 5). It's tempting to think that there's a recognition here on Copeau's part—or on his translators'—of the left-leaning sensibilities of his Greenwich Village audience that may have informed this phrasing, given the involvement of many not only in artistic activities, but also in radical politics, including labor activism.[41] In addition, one of the two plagues of the theatre, "commercialism" in the English, appears in the French as *industrialisme*. The related but nonetheless distinct meanings of these two words introduces some indeterminacy in what would be equivalent sentences: "You know, ladies and gentlemen, the meaning of the word commercialism in the theatre" (SLT, 7). "Vous savez, mesdames et messieurs, ce que signifie ce mot d'industrialisme du théâtre" (SLT [Fr.], 5). That Copeau assumes previous knowledge of commercialism, or *industrialisme*, and does not delve into commercialism as much as *cabotinage*, leaves much open to interpretation. Likewise, in another instance, what is in English "the ingratitude of the public" is put in French as *la bassesse*—the baseness, lowness (SLT [Fr.], 5). The common denominator appears to be a criticism of the public's lack of regard for the theatrical institution, and yet, when the word *ingratitude* exists in French, questions remain about the connotations we might infer from these lexical distinctions.

The version of Copeau's speech published in French in *Cahiers* in 1954 appears to be almost identical to the French manuscript version at the BnF, with the exception of added section titles (for example: "Un esprit d'amour et de liberté" [A spirit of love and liberty])[42] and the omission of Copeau's opening remarks from the main text, including his facetious comment that "these Washington Square Players are horrible people. They succeed in everything they undertake" (SLT, 1). An abridged version of these comments is, however, quoted in editor A[ndré] F [rank]'s introduction.

Notes

1 See Jacques Copeau, *Journal 1901–1948: Deuxième Partie, 1916–1948,* ed. Claude Sicard (Paris: Seghers, 1991); Douglas Crowder, "Jacques Copeau in New York," *South Central Bulletin* 29.4 (1969): 125–8; Thomas John Donahue, *Jacques Copeau's Friends and Disciples: The Théâtre du Vieux-Colombier in New York City, 1917–1919* (New York: Peter Lang, 2008); John Harrop, "'A Constructive Promise': Jacques Copeau in New York, 1917–1919," *Theatre Survey* 12.2 (1971): 104–18; Maurice Kurtz, *Jacques Copeau: Biography of a Theater* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1999); Norman Henry Paul, "Jacques Copeau: Apostle of the Theatre," Ph.D. diss. (New York University, Graduate School of Arts and Science, 1961); Norman H. Paul, "Jacques Copeau Looks at the American Stage, 1917–1919," *Educational Theatre Journal* 29.1 (1977): 61–9.

2 Mark Evans and Cass Fleming, "Jacques Copeau," *The Great European Stage Directors,* vol. 3: *Copeau, Komisarjevsky, Guthrie*, ed. Jonathan Pitches (London: Methuen, 2019), 15–67, at 15.

3 Ibid., 19–21; Kurtz, *Jacques Copeau,* 12–16, 39.

4 Qtd. in Kurtz, *Jacques Copeau*, 13.

5 Simon Shepherd, "Introduction to the Series," *Great European Stage Directors*, 3:1–5, at 2. For background on the Little Theatre movement in the United States, see, for example, Dorothy Chansky, *Composing Ourselves: The Little Theatre Movement and the American Audience* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 2004); Constance D'Arcy Mackay, *The Little Theatre in the United States* (New York: Henry Holt & Co., 1917); and Kenneth Macgowan, *Footlights across America: Towards a National Theater* (New York: Harcourt, Brace & Co., 1929).

6 Paul, "Jacques Copeau: Apostle," 180–1; Donahue, *Jacques Copeau's Friends and Disciples,* 23–38; Kurtz, *Jacques Copeau,* 44–9.

7 Paul, "Jacques Copeau Looks," 61.

8 See Jacques Copeau, "The New School of Stage Scenery: And a Word on the Art of Joseph Urban and Richard Ordynski," *Vanity Fair* 8.4 (1917): 36, 114; Jacques Copeau, "The True Spirit of the Art of the Stage, As It Is Being Interpreted at the Vieux-Colombier," *Vanity Fair* 8.2 (1917): 49.

9 Paul, "Jacques Copeau Looks," 63–4; Wisner Payne Kinne, *George Pierce Baker and the American Theatre* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1954), 244.

10 Eugene Miller Wank, "The Washington Square Players: Experiment toward Professionalism." Ph.D. diss. (University of Oregon, Department of Speech, 1973), 93, 105.

11 Ibid., 93.

12 Paul, "Jacques Copeau Looks," 63 n. 7; Jacques Copeau, "L'Esprit des Petits Théâtres," in "Le Petit Théâtre," special issue, *Cahiers de la Compagnie Madeleine Renaud–Jean-Louis Barrault* 2.4 (1954): 8–20. Norman Paul titles the lecture "The Spirit of the Little Theatres," plural, which tracks with the French title of the 1954 published version; see Paul, "Jacques Copeau Looks," 62. The Copeau English manuscript title, "The Spirit in the Little Theatre," is used here, however, and the nuance of difference in the preposition is, we suggest, significant and consonant with the content of the lecture.

13 Paul, "Jacques Copeau Looks," 61.

14 Jacques Copeau, "The Spirit in the Little Theatre—Washington Square Players," 1917 (hereinafter cited parenthetically in the text as SLT), Jacques Copeau Collection, Department of Performing Arts, Bibliothèque nationale de France, 4-COL-1(457), 6. The French manuscript version from this archive is untitled and is designated hereinafter as [Fr.].

15 See Evans and Fleming, "Jacques Copeau," 34–7.

16 Perhaps especially in the noncirculating Copeau *Registres* III and IV, and what Paul ("Jacques Copeau Looks," 64 n. 10) refers to as the "Journal d'Amérique," as well as additional documents, notes, etc. in the Copeau archive in the BnF.

17 See the bibliography in Wank, "Washington Square Players" for a listing of relevant archives for the Players.

18 See Copeau, *Journal,* 39–77.

19 Theresa M. Collins, *Otto Kahn: Art, Money, & Modern Time* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2002), 112.

20 See John Kobler, *Otto the Magnificent: The Life of Otto Kahn* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1988), 127–35; Wank, "Washington Square Players," 112–00.

21 Qtd. in ibid., 129.

22 See Kurtz, *Jacques Copeau*, chap. 3. The war, of course, soon brought both instruction and production at the Vieux-Colombier to a halt.
23 Kobler, *Otto,* 129.
24 Kimberly Jannarone, *Artaud and His Doubles* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2010), 142.
25 Donahue, *Jacques Copeau's Friends and Disciples,* 28–9; Ames's Little Theatre was the name of the venue, not to be confused with companies that were part of the Little Theatre movement, although Ames did champion the work of some writers who were part of that movement.
26 See Wank, "Washington Square Players," 228–9 and Appendixes I and III. The Players had also recently hired an acting coach, Beverly Sitgreaves, affiliated with the Théâtre Anglais in Paris, to work with them; it is not known if Copeau had met her there.
27 Copeau, *Journal,* 47.
28 Ibid., 74.
29 In this regard, Copeau is really referencing only Western nations.
30 Wank, "Washington Square Players," 4.
31 For a more detailed contrast of Duse's acting along these lines, see Bernard Shaw's 1895 analysis "Duse and Bernhardt" in his collection *Our Theatres in the Nineties,* 3 vols. (London: Constable & Co. Ltd., 1932), 1:148–54.
32 Copeau, *Journal*, 76–7.
33 Ibid., 77; translation ours.
34 Wank, "Washington Square Players," 93.
35 Ibid., 185.
36 Ibid.
37 The United States declared war against Germany and the Central Powers on 6 April 1917.
38 Copeau, "New School of Stage Scenery," 36, 114.
39 Wank, "Washington Square Players," 193, 216.
40 Samuel A. Eliot Jr., "Le Théâtre du Vieux Colombier," *Theatre Arts Magazine* 3.1 (1919): 25–30, at 30.
41 See Leslie Fishbein, *Rebels in Bohemia: The Radicals of "The Masses," 1911–1917* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1982).
42 Copeau, "L'Esprit des Petits Théâtres," 10.

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