

July 10, 1964

Dr. J. C. Mickel, Chairman
Department of Speech and Theatre
Millikin University
Decatur, Illinois

Dear Dr. Mickel:

Please forgive my delay in answering your letter of June 20, regarding the exciting plans for taking your production of The Little Clay Cart to New York for an Off-Broadway showing. We have been so involved in inaugurating our first UMKC Summer Repertory Theatre that correspondence simply had to wait. This has been a dream of mine for a long time to evolve a theatre which would pay our actors and production staff, and this year's company of thirty-one paid members is at least a happy beginning.

Unfortunately, I cannot be much help to you in offering ideas about the Off-Broadway production. You see, I did not instigate the Off-Broadway Electra production. Judith Evelyn, who played the role of Electra in our Playhouse production, simply insisted that I come to New York to direct the same production Off-Broadway. Her producer was not interested in our production in toto--indeed, only one case member, our Orestes, accompanied me. Were the matter to come up again, I would not embark on such a project again unless the total of production were to be transported to New York and unless I would have full hand in the selection of the cast. This was not so. Even at that, the experience was very rewarding, but I considered it an artistic failure in many ways and I would not recommend that anyone should project himself into an Off-Broadway venture unless he has full controls of production and direction. This was not at all the case with Electra.

As you will surmise from my note about our Repertory Theatre, I think the wise procedure in decentralization of Theatre is doing everything we can to build repertory centers all over the United States. I was frankly appalled by production conditions Off-Broadway in New York and I do not believe we would do our students any great service by sending them off into that type of situation. On the other hand, I think we could do a very real service by working toward the development of professional Theatre all over America.

You will see, therefore, that I had no problems regarding financing,

housing, unions, etc.--unfortunately. How I wish I had held responsibility for all details of the venture!

Nevertheless, it offered great rewards, and I certainly could not say that it was not a fine learning experience. If you can manage all details of production, take your own people, and be in charge of everything, go ahead full speed. I shall look forward to Convention when we might discuss this in more detail.

Yours sincerely,

Patricia McIlrath, Chairman
Department of Speech and Theatre and
Director, The University Playhouse

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