Edward Hopper's penchant for presenting dramatic encounters may have evolved from his love of theater and movies. His enthusiasm for theater dated back to his childhood in Nyack, New York, when his mother encouraged him to read, as he was called, and his older sister Marion in both art and theater. He often helped with his sister's stage puppet shows and plays in their home. As a teenager, Hopper sketched constantly, often depicting subjects related to the theater—from actors on stage to elegantly dressed members of the audience (Figs. 1, 2, and 3).

Hopper's interest in theater was further nurtured by Robert Henri, his favorite teacher at the New York School of Art. One classmate, Clifton Webb, actually gave up painting to become an actor. Even Hopper's fascination with plays of Henrik Ibsen was probably promoted by Henri, for in Henri's book, The Art Spirit, Ibsen is cited as "supreme order in verbal expression." Hopper made both an illustration (Fig. 4) and a caricature which refers to Ibsen, who, like him, was concerned with the problems of the individual as a social being. In his caricature Le rêve de Josie (Fig. 5), Hopper depicted himself as a fattered, professorial intellectual. One of the five books in his basket is titled "Ibsen." Both the playwright and the painter considered symbolic value within a context of seeming realism. Hopper also expressed his respect for Ibsen in the essay he wrote for the catalogue of his exhibition at the Museum of Modern Art in 1933. Discussing "definite personalities that remain forever modern by the fundamental truth that is in them," he observed: "[Modern] art makes Vingtième siecle, Ibsen's name as new as Ibsen." During his student years, about 1903-1905, Hopper painted a Group of Musicians in an Orchestra Pit (Fig. 6) suggesting his interest in several paintings by Edgar Degas, one of the artists Henri encouraged his students to study. Degas' The Orchestra of the Opera (Fig. 7) seems to have suggested to Hopper both the theme and a similar compositional arrangement. Throughout his career, Hopper acknowledged his admiration for Degas and referred to himself as "an impressionist." In Paris from October 1906 through the spring of 1907, Hopper pursued his love of the theater and wrote home about what he saw to his mother, an equally enthusiastic fan of the stage. He went to the opera, saw Shakespeare's Julius Caesar, and he noted: "I saw Coquelin in Cyrano de Bergerac—he looked pretty good to me." Hopper also enjoyed observing French pagannity, for he later recalled the carnival of Mardi Gras in his painting Sor Bleu of about 1914 (Fig. 8).

When Hopper married in 1924, he found in Jo Nivison not only a fellow painter but a former actress who also adored the theater. Their frequent attendance at plays and movies had two direct effects on his painting: his choice of theaters as subject matter and the development of compositions that were often influenced by set design, stage light and cinematographic devices such as cropping and unusual angles of vision. Hopper's enthusiasm for theater—and for arriving at performances on time—is demonstrated by a cartoon he made to tease Jo about her tardiness (Fig. 9).

Two on the Alise of 1927 (Fig. 10), Hopper's first important painting of a theater theme, presents an elegantly dressed couple taking their seats near the stage before a play begins. They have arrived early; only one other woman is visible in an adjacent box, and she is reading. We look down at this scene as if we too have just arrived and have taken our seats in an upper balcony. The next year, Hopper produced a drypoint, The Balcony of the Movies (Fig. 11), which also focused on the wait before show time. His painting First Row Orchestra of 1951 (Fig. 12)....

Edward Hopper: The Influence of Theater and Film

Gail Levin

Edward Hopper's penchant for presenting dramatic encounters may have evolved from his lifelong love of the theater and his avid enthusiasm for movies. Theater and films play an important role in Hopper's work.

Fig. 1. Edward Hopper, Behind the Scenes (detail), 1926, Pencil on paper. Whitney Museum of American Art, Bequest of Josephine H. Hopper.

Fig. 2. Edward Hopper, Woman with Opera Glasses, 1939, Ink on paper. Whitney Museum of American Art, Bequest of Josephine H. Hopper.

Fig. 3. Edward Hopper, Before the Footlights, 1906, Ink on paper, 14 1/16 x 9 1/16. Whitney Museum of American Art, Bequest of Josephine H. Hopper (70.158.82).

Fig. 4. Edward Hopper, Study of Illustration for Henrik Ibsen, c. 1900-05, Ink on paper, 14 1/4 x 11 3/16. Whitney Museum of American Art, Bequest of Josephine H. Hopper (70.158.81).

Fig. 5. Edward Hopper, Le rêve de Josie, c. 1924-25, Pencil on paper, 11 x 8 1/2. Private Collection.

Fig. 6. Edward Hopper, Group of Musicians in an Orchestra Pit, 1906. Oil on canvas, 15 x 12. Whitney Museum of American Art, Bequest of Josephine H. Hopper (70.1243).
12) depicts a theme similar to Two on the Aisle: another stylishly clad couple seated near the stage before the show begins. Hopper had earlier developed various theatrical themes in several of his magazine illustrations of theaters made during the early 1920s, such as those for Tavern Topics, Hotel Management, or Scribner's (Figs. 13 and 14).

Hopper had once depicted a solitary patron seated in an empty theater before what is either a stage or an early movie screen, in a grisaille of about 1903 (Fig. 15). His theater or movie house interiors are easily distinguished from those of the other artists—for example, John Sloan's Movies, Five Cents of 1937 or the noisy, crowded scene of Mabel Dwight's lithograph of The Cliffs, Movie Theatre of 1936 (Fig. 16). Hopper characteristically depicted a nearly empty theater and focused on the patrons' concentration, while Sloan and Dwight were both captivated by the lively interaction of the audience. Likewise, Hopper's 1936 exterior view of The Circle Theatre (Fig. 17) reveals a nearly deserted street corner, while Sloan's view of the Carmina Theatre in 1912 represented a more animated scene described by Sloan himself as "a little window little customers hanging around a small movie show." 10

In The Sheridan Theatre of 1937 (Fig. 18), Hopper shows a woman raining, leaning against the balustrade. He made numerous preparatory sketches while visiting the theater, paying careful attention to details of the architecture which, along with the artificial electric lighting, figure importantly in the painting. Hopper has created drama and mood through a vast interior space enhanced by artificial lighting. Although the architecture remains important in New York Movie of 1938 (Fig. 19), Hopper's central concern is the figure of the usherette leaning against a wall, bored, presumably having seen the movie more times than she cared to remember. The few members of the audience do not attract our attention, for they are intently watching the film. On the contrary, it is the evocative lighting of this fictive world of dreams (both on the screen and in the ornate details of movie palace architecture itself) which captures our imagination. Hopper appears to have drawn inspiration from Degas for both his composition and his sense of nocturnal drama. As in Degas' Interior of about 1868-69 (Fig. 20), a painting he probably saw exhibited at the Metropolitan Museum and certainly knew from its reproduction in a book he owned, Hopper organized his composition with a sharply receding diagonal, thrusting emphatically into space and culminating in an off-center vanishing point. 11 Even the pose of the usherette in New York Movie closely resembles the stance of the man in Interior. And the dramatic lights and shadows of Hopper's dimly lit movie house also recall the Degas picture. Hopper made many sketches for New York Movie at the Strand, Palace, Republic, and Globe theaters: for the usherette he had Jo pose in the hallway of their apartment building.

One of Hopper's most surprising theatrical paintings, Girlie

Show of 1941 (Fig. 21), presents a nearly nude burlesque dancer seductively waving her skirt behind her as she prances across the floodlit stage above the members of an all-male orchestra. Such overt sexuality is unique in Hopper's work. Quite possibly, in aligning our eye level with the musicians' heads and having us look up at the dancer on the stage, Hopper was inspired by Degas' Musicians of the Orchestra, painted in 1872 (Fig. 22). The significance of theatrical themes for Hopper is emphasized by Intermission of 1963 (Fig. 23) and Two Comedians of 1965 (Fig. 24); two of the last four pictures that he painted before his death in 1967. In Intermission, Hopper again presented a solitary figure, a seated woman calmly waiting for the others to return and for the play to continue. Two years later, Hopper painted Two Comedians, which Jo described as "a dark stage (and what a stage, strong as the deck of a ship) and two small figures in the Hop part then than the Conabtion E. For great pass he as I most draw this pat F and cha hich the Eve pla for I attul for Ar incet de the

Fig. 9. Edward Hopper, A la Route au Theatre, c. 1934-36. Pencil on paper, 9 5/8 x 7 7/8". Private Collection.

Fig. 7. Edgar Degas, The Orchestra of the Opera, 1868-69. Oil on canvas. Musée du Louvre, Paris.

Fig. 8. Edward Hopper, Gouff Blee, 1914. Oil on canvas, 36 x 72". Whitney Museum of American Art, Bequest of Josephine N. Hopper (76.1226).

Fig. 10. Edward Hopper, Two on the Aisle, 1927. Oil on canvas, 48 1/4 x 48 7/8". Toledo Museum of Art, Gift of Edward Drummond Libbey, 1935.

Fig. 11. Edward Hopper, The Balcony, 1928. Drypoint, 8 x 10". Whitney Museum of American Art, Bequest of Josephine N. Hopper.

figures out of pantomime. Poignant,13 Jo later confirmed that in the tall male comedian and the diminutive female comedian Hopper had represented the two of them.14 It was intended as a personal statement, a farewell of sorts, for when he showed them gracefully bowing out, he had been ill and would die less than two years later. Hopper's conception of a comedian on stage first occurred in a drawing he made in 1905—which nevertheless seems remarkably close to his sketches for Two Comedians (Figs. 25 and 26). In an unpublished illustration of about 1917-20 (Fig. 27), he had shown a couple on stage, as if about to bow, with the man holding a palette.

Even in his last painting, Hopper appears to have recalled French art. His composition is reminiscent of Daumier's lithograph The Recall of the Singer (Fig. 28), while the costumes suggest those of the Commedia dell'Arte characters painted frequently by Watteau. Hopper appears to have cast himself and his wife as the young lovers Pierrot and Pierrette. They appear as two comedians who, by their last act, have discovered the most ironic comedy of all—human existence. Since Hopper chose to portray himself as a clown here, it is tempting to speculate that, at the very least, he had also felt some degree of identification with the downcast bald-headed clown in his early painting Soir Bleu.15

Hopper, it seems clear, saw the theater as a metaphor for life, and himself as a kind of stage director, setting up scenes to paint based on events that took place around him, casting his characters from types he observed.16 He had learned to use light to create drama as only a master stage craftsman could. Although his dramas were imaginary, his directing was inspired. Even in his habit of having Jo pose for all the women he painted, he acted like a director giving a favorite actress many roles to play. Jo, who had actually acted in theater, was well prepared for her duties.

During the 1920s and 1930s, we know that Hopper frequently attended the theater, for he saved many ticket stubs and carefully recorded the name of the play on the reverse of each. The 1920s marked the establishment of mature and original drama in America, with the emergence of a group of talented playwrights, including Eugene O'Neill, Maxwell Anderson, and Elmer Rice. As Hopper's painting was coming of age, he was partaking of the fruits of the American theater. In the often brilliant sets designed for these stage productions, as well as by the content of the plays, Hopper found inspiration for his own painting.

On February 14, 1929, Hopper and his wife saw Elmer Rice's Street Scene which had just opened a month earlier at the Playhouse Theater. The set for this Pulitzer Prize-winning play (Fig. 29) was designed by Jo Mielziner, whose mother became the Hoppers' neighbor in the 1920s. When they began to spend almost every summer there in 1930. That the Hoppers found this set memorable is indicated by a letter Jo wrote to Hopper's sister Marion in July of 1930: "My friend, Mrs. Mielzin-

or has invited me to bring you there. She's the mother of that Street Scene set we loved so much. Jo Mielziner, the artist and Kenneth McKenna, the actor, are her sons. They come sometimes."17 The set, representing the exterior of a two-story apartment house, with its flat facade extending the width of the stage, may well have inspired Hopper to paint Early Sunday Morning (Fig. 30), a similar row of New York apartments in a shallow space, parallel to the picture plane, extending across the face of the canvas.18 Originally Hopper had put a figure in one of the windows, as in the set, but he painted it out.19
Hopper's Early Sunday Morning of 1930 is the quintessential street scene. The buildings are viewed at an angle from above as if seen from a building across the way. In fact, the Hoppers saw Mielziner's Street Scene set from the second balcony, and it is this experience that may have suggested the slightly elevated viewpoint perspective of Early Sunday Morning. In a more general way, the dramatic lighting in the painting (32) speaks for the influence of theater. Hopper's interest in both stage sets and lighting is confirmed by a comment he made upon seeing some foliage illuminated by light coming from a restaurant window at night: "Notice how artificial trees look at night? These look like a theater at night."

In 1940, Hopper was evidently approached to design a set for a ballet. He admired her reaction to this in her diary. E. P. Bok, Everybody wanted E. to make a stage set for the Ballet Russe. Thought I had better get some data on the proposition. . . . E says they are just shopping round to see what they could get. Want a name. Would want to pay Jo Mielziner or Bobby Jones I suppose. Jo & Bobby Jones would insist on proper handling of any design of theirs and most skillful lighting—no expense spared for use of their names.

Hopper was an especially avid fan of the cinema. As an illustrator, he had made many posters for movies. He later complained: "Sometimes I did movie posters. Say the movie was about the Napoleonics. Well, I'd do the soldiers in French uniforms of that period. They'd make me re-do them and put them in khaki uniform and campaign hats like American soldiers."

He once reportedly told a friend: "When I don't feel in the mood for painting I go on a regular movie binge." In 1934, Hopper and Jo saw Alexander Hall's movie Pursuit of Happiness about which she wrote in her diary: "Want to see film—Pursuit of Happiness. E says pity they couldn't give it any reality at all as much available in architecture & costume—why not give any of it the dignity of reality." As late as 1962, Hopper said: "If anyone wants to see what America is, go and see a movie called The Savage Eye. It is the story of a young man from a small town who gets into the movies. He is impressed by Marry, a 1955 movie of Paddy Chayefsky's story about a lonely fellow meeting a lonely woman in a Bronx dance hall. To another interviewer, Hopper remarked that he was looking forward to seeing Jean-Luc Godard's Breathless, a film set in Paris, and that he admired French "prouvéurs" (the meant directors).

Hopper often cropped his pictures very aggressively as though seen through a shifting camera lens. Paintings like New York Pavements of about 1924, The Barber Shop of 1931, or Office in a Small City of 1953 might well be frozen frames from a movie. The latter painting recalls the opening scene from Dodsworth, a 1936 film by William Wyler. Recently, cinematographers have drawn inspiration from Hopper's compositions for their own films, just as he had once borrowed ideas from earlier movies. For example, in Alfred Hitchcock's Psycho of 1960, the old house resembles and evokes the mood of that in Hopper's well-known painting of 1925, House by the Railroad (Figs. 31 and 32). As Hitchcock aimed to recreate the powerful symbolic content conveyed by Hopper's painting, so Hopper had learned to enhance drama from his experience at the movies and the theater. As early as 1928, a critic noted of Hopper: "This style defined description as the purest drama defies all printed lines depending on the art of the theatre for inspiration.""}

This article was originally presented in a similar format in New Orleans on January 31, 1961 at the annual meeting of the College Art Association. For further information, see Gail Levin, Edward Hopper: The Art and the Artist, W. W. Norton & Co. in association with the Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, 1980, which accompanies the exhibition Edward Hopper: The Art and the Artist, sponsored by Philip Morris Incorporated and the National Endowment for the Arts.

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**Fig. 1. Edward Hopper, Glimpse of New York, 1934. Oil on canvas, 36 x 48". Private Collection.**

**Fig. 2. Edgar Deich, Musician of the Orchestra, 1967. Oil on canvas, 77 1/2 x 72". Kunsthalle, Bremen.**

**Fig. 3. Edward Hopper, Intermission, 1963. Oil on canvas, 40 x 60". Private Collection.**

**Fig. 4. Edward Hopper, The Interior, 1926-28. Oil on canvas, 14 x 10 1/2". McNamara Collection, Philadelphia.**

**Fig. 5. Edward Hopper, A Couple Dancing, c. 1917-20. Wash on illustration board, 20 x 15". Whitney Museum of American Art, Bequest of Josephine N. Hopper (70.1339).**

**Fig. 6. Edward Hopper, Study for Two Comedians, 1985. Charcoal on paper, 8 x 11". Private Collection.**

**Fig. 7. Edward Hopper, Two Comedians, 1985. Oil on canvas, 29 x 40". Private Collection.**

**Fig. 8. Edward Hopper, All the Way, 1938. Oil on canvas, 60 x 40. Private Collection.**

**Fig. 9. Edward Hopper, The Family, 1967. Oil on canvas, 17 x 28 1/2". Private Collection.**

**Fig. 10. Edward Hopper, A Garden, 1952. Oil on canvas, 28 1/2 x 40". Fund for Education and Research, Whitney Museum of American Art. Bequest of Josephine N. Hopper (70.1352).**

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**Fig. 11. Edward Hopper, A Game of Chess, c. 1929. Oil on canvas, 24 x 30 1/2". Private Collection.**

**Fig. 12. Edward Hopper, A Gym Class, 1951. Oil on canvas, 72 x 72". Whitney Museum of American Art. Bequest of Josephine N. Hopper (70.1353).**

**Fig. 13. Edward Hopper, The Library, 1940. Oil on canvas, 28 1/2 x 24". Whitney Museum of American Art. Bequest of Josephine N. Hopper (70.1354).**

**Fig. 14. Edward Hopper, The Office, 1930. Oil on canvas, 28 1/2 x 14". Private Collection.**

**Fig. 15. Edward Hopper, The Sea is Like a Wine, 1963. Oil on canvas, 30 x 24". Private Collection.**

**Fig. 16. Edward Hopper, A Couple, 1917-18. Oil on canvas, 24 x 30 1/4". Whitney Museum of American Art. Bequest of Josephine N. Hopper (70.1339)."
Fig. 31. Alfred Hitchcock, Still from Psycho, 1960. Museum of Modern Art, Film Stills Archive.

Fig. 32. Edward Hopper, House by the Railroad, 1925. Oil on canvas, 24 x 20". Museum of Modern Art.