



# **The Proscenium Arch - A Representation of our Anxiety within the Theatre?**

*Francis Grin*

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Scientific Essay from the year 2008 in the subject Theater Studies, Dance, grade: H1, University of Melbourne, course: Architecture, Space, and Theatre, 10 entries in the bibliography, language: English, abstract: The frontal set-up of the proscenium arch now marks a central point of debate regarding the nature of representation within the theatre. The proscenium's frontal architectural form seems to have little room for discussion as it detaches the spectator from the performance through the employment of the fourth wall. This lack of discussion has repeatedly been blamed for the reestablishment of traditional bourgeois values and hegemonic sign-systems within the theatre. (Heuvel 1992) Hence, the 20th century was more than happy to embrace the multitude of theatrical innovations as new staging concepts stirred away from the 'antiquity' of the proscenium arch, moving into a new and exciting artistic terrain that involved theatre in the round, environmental theatre, etc. (Heuvel 1992) These innovations celebrated the theatre as an interactive experience between the actors and the audience, liberating the stage from the 'dull' frontal viewing that the proscenium arch had seemed to chain itself to. Representation within these emerging theatre styles evolved into a state of 'experiencing the image' rather than merely 'viewing it' and the audience was now able to play an active role, allowing them to interact/question the sign systems on stage. Oddly enough, the proscenium still seems to be the most common form of staging within our Western theatre culture. Realistic, Epic, and the Post-modern Theatre of Images mark three of the most historically significant genres within the theatrical movement, yet, these three styles predominantly employ the proscenium arch as a theatre space. Their regressive use of this staging has at times been considered reactionary, leading to anxieties about a backlash within the theatrical

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