CHAPTER FOUR

CONCLUSION

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One of the central lessons of the current meltdown is that it is criminally stupid to predict the future. We have no idea what’s going to happen…we’re a money town from which the money has disappeared. As much hardship as this will bring—it also presents us with a great creative opportunity…culture will be deinstitutionalized; art will emerge again out of necessity rather than out of corporate funding cycles. (Anderson)

The 21st century brought tough times for the world on almost every frontier; whether it is socio-political or economical or cultural. Britain faced many setbacks within these few initial years of the 21st century including repeated terrorist attacks from 2005 to the recent on 15th September 2017; a massive financial collapse with the recession of 2008 where the unemployment ratio went up till 81% in the 2011 while it was only 5.5% in the beginning of the century; involvement in two controversial wars with Afghanistan (2001–14) and Iraq (2003–11); the phone-hacking scandal (British tabloid News of the World NoW), horrific revelations of systematic child sexual abuse (The Rotherham child sexual exploitation scandal) and last but not the least is the hotshot issue of UK leaving the European Union.
The century seems to be quite harsh but it’s not that easy to break the human endurance and the spirit. Rather, there has always been a sign of continuity, confidence and ease in such conditions. The century also brought gay marriage, Harry Potter and the London Olympics.

Analysing the literary conceptions, the 21st century again has not been an era predominated by any single theatrical movement; instead there have been a proliferation of various theatrical forms in the last sixteen years; ranging from immersive and site-specific theatre to verbatim and documentary drama; from one-to-one performances to a new interest in what, in the UK, are perceived to be European directing and design practices.

Through various forms and forums, the theatre has reflected and contemplated on the arbitrative and allusive cultural paradox that is the highlight of the 21st century Britain; earnestly striving to identify new theatrical and dramaturgical formations and formulas that can be applied to capture and interrogate convoluted and entangled world of the present era.

The literary productions of the era too have more oddities than ever before. There is a surprising combination of stasis and innovation. The mesmerising impact of Modernism still dominated the era. That is quite obvious that it’s almost next to impossible to list only a selected few forms and playwrights who left their marks on the history of the theatrical movement as the century produced a number of outstanding talents. Than too, a few names can be put forward as the representatives of the talents born in the recent years and have left the imprints of them in the heart of audience: Caryl Churchill, Nina Raine, debbie tucker green, Bola Agbaje, Lucy Prebble, Roy Williams, Terry Johnson, Joe Penhall, Tanika Gupta, Jez Butterworth; to name a few.
Yet, the classic controversies kept hovering over these playwrights too; theatre debates continue over the political implications of new writing against the impromptu or devised theatre, the dramatic v/s the post-dramatic and the most discussed, the role of spectator - passive or active. At the same time, the musical theatre of West End and Broadway attracted twice as many audiences as those attending plays.

London theatre can to be called to be still enjoying its golden period. Not only from the creativity or artistic point of view but at the box office too it is booming. Shows like War Horse, Matilda and Billy Elliot sold like hot cakes and got high hits both at home and abroad. Consecutively, innovative companies like Punchdrunk extended the limits of theatre; opened up diversified channels for theatre popularization via cinema screenings and online broadcasts to reach to the wider range of audiences; the West End could excel in his box office talking with all time high rankings for the successive tenth year.

Audiences in London have wide ranged and unmatched versions of theatrical offerings encompassing the extensive varieties to offer – from ambiguously creative experimental new writing in small, property-less backrooms or pubs or rather a garage to a pompous large scaled musical night in the commercial West End theatres and mind-blowing reinterpretations and revival of the classical texts in the subsidized venues like the Royal Shakespeare Company.

In fact, London is one of the two great theatre capitals of the world, along with New York. It has a vibrant theatre scene that ranges from big budget large-scale musicals to small avant-garde theatre productions performed in found spaces. Analyzing on the larger level, the capital city London alone consists more than 241 professional theatre with the capacity of 110,000 spectators. On figures available (for Broadway), West End theatre attendances outstrip Broadway attendances by 20%.
Caro Newling, President of the Society of London Theatre said:

With our shows performing to record numbers, the box office figures for 2016 further cement London’s place as a world-leader in theatre. Revenues are just one measure of success; what we are most proud is that new generation of theatre-goers are drawn to the capital, home of the world’s greatest creative talent, by our peerless ability to craft and tell the stories that resonate. (BWW News Desk)

Scanning it from an employment angle, London is the biggest center of theatre employment in the UK and one of the biggest theatrical employers (probably having no competition in the matter of figures) in the world. At a time London’s professional theatres engage an estimated 3,141 performers. Along with these 3,141 live performers (including musicians as well as actors, dancers, opera singers etc.), approximately 2,300 still participate with the current production alongside a further nearly 850 in rehearsal.

Going further with more statistical data, 2016 had been another robust year for the capital’s flourishing theatre industry. ‘Gross revenue was of £644,719,639 that’s 1.7% up compared to 2015 Sales. Generated VAT receipts for the treasury were of £107,543,273. Attendance of 14,328,121 was down 2.8% compared to last year but the number of performances was 5.95% down (compared to 2015). 76.7% of available seats were filled which is 4.1% up compared to 2015 and a new record of highest Weekly attendance was in w/c (week commencing) December 26, 2016 with number of 439,103’. (BWW News Desk)
‘Along with the statistics, another evidence of the ever increasing popularity of London theatre is the average price paid for a ticket, that was £45 (an increase of 4.68%) which suggests an increase in demand and reduction in discounts’. (BWW News Desk)

Additionally, according to the most recent report from Visit Britain, 24% of holiday visitors staying in London definitely visit the theatre, resulting in an estimation of just over 2 million international tourists overall enjoying a show in the capital every year. In fact, the most recent SOLT demographic survey estimates that around 3 in 10 West End spectators come from overseas.

4.1 Leading Trends and Trend Setters:

Even after enduring the various setbacks throughout the initial years, specifically the uneven economic growth; the 21st century has been highly successful for the UK’s creative industries. The latest report uncovers that the creative industries are now worth £76.9 billion a year to the UK economy. Further, the UK entertainment industry is predicted to grow annually by 3.1% until at least 2018, giving investors the confidence to invest even further in the creative industries. (UK Entertainment … £64bn by 2018)

Resulting out of the increasing popularity of theatrical experiences with newer forms, and the development of new technology that supplements these experiences to be shared with more people, the theatre industry has grown terrific in last few years. London’s West End which despite government cuts to arts funding, earned £618.5m in 2014 and was 20% busier than Broadway.

However, the success of theatre industry is not new; with the advancement of every year, the development of numerous initiatives have improved its profitability resulting out of the expansion of live broadcasting, the development of the innovative attitudes and the
introduction of theatre tax relief. As the industry continues to accept new trends and
revives through every interval, audience remains exited and prepared for an increasingly
international, immersive and accessible experience.

4.2 Live Theatre Broadcast: A Major Source of Revenue Generation

Though live theatre broadcasting is not new, it is only now beginning to represent an
important revenue stream for many arts institutions. Indeed, it has become an industry in
itself and it is currently the fastest growing technology within the UK arts.

In the beginning, when live broadcasting first tried to step in, theatres were reasonably
circumspect in their acceptance of the new technology. As the first reaction, the National
Theatre rejected to sell future rights to broadcast performances, striving to avoid multiple
negotiations and royalty issues. Rather, in the present days, it has proven its profitability;
the New York Metropolitan Opera, which could make only $5million with the usage of
the technology in 2006 (when it was newly launched); made $34.5million from it in 2013
according to the database supplied by Wall Street Journal.

Analysing the numbers provided by Annual Report 2013-14, NT Live could earn only
£2.4million that consisted just 3% of the National Theatre’s annual income, turned the
profit to £6.7million that was 7% of its annual income in just one year. Likewise, the
production of Warhorse broke the records worldwide with the broadcast over 1.4 million
people through NT Live and the success has paved way for many more such records to be
broken in the coming days.

The structural redevelopment of the theatre has particularly been designed to allocate a
special room for the expansion of NT Live and the restructured theatre houses are
typically equipped with personalized digital production facilities. The commercial value
of theatre broadcasting has come up front and it has completely changed the scenario of theatre production and presentations.

These upgradations resulted into the birth of a concept called video on demand that allows users to watch some of London’s biggest theatres productions at home at their own choice. In the 21st century, theatre turned to Digital Theatre and brought the London stage to a greater number of audiences than the 2,700,000 who till date have already been benefited with an NT Live production with the supplements of global access rights; apps provided for computer, Smart TV and mobile phone.

Indeed, this digitalization has been highly encouraged and supported through joint ventures by various companies and production houses. In 2013, Google initiated a project with the Royal Shakespeare Company to concoct and broadcast an interactive version of *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*; concurrently in 2014 *The Guardian* joint hands with London’s Royal Court Theatre with the specific purpose of creating short plays in response to topical events.

In the recent times, live broadcast have gained great attention of audiences and as a result, producers got engrossed in developing and exploring the technology further. These days, live broadcast has been an increasingly important aspect of the theatre industry that promises to encompass many more millions of spectators than the 250-seat auditorium can include.

### 4.3 The Future of International Productions:

British theatre really is world-leading theatre. “The next five years is not only about growing in the UK,” said Sir Howard during a talk regarding Plans for the major expansion. “It’s about growing internationally”. (Cave)
In the past few years, London theatre encountered more fame and successful than ever that made the investors accept the export of British theatrical content and realized even greater opportunities for growth. The prospective development took the initiative in 2013 when Providence Equity took hold of The Ambassador’s Theatre Group, the largest theatre owner in the world and subsequently announced for the envisioned expansion plans that included opening of a brand new theatre in Seoul, the world’s fifth largest musical theatre city, along with two in Sydney, the city that fulfills the needs for most of the international products touring in South-East Asia.

‘Same as The Ambassador’s Theatre Group, Andrew Lloyd Webber’s Really Useful Group also worked towards the expansion strategies in 2014 by splitting theatre owning arm from its copyright-owning division, with the vision of allowing the latter to expand internationally’ (Dennys). The prospective upgradation of portfolio of venues faced restrictions due to the lack of available theatre space in London, while the market for the group’s intellectual property grew worldwide. The Group came up with a grand success in China; after various successful tours, *Cats* was chosen by the Shanghai Grand Theatre to get concerted into Mandarin in 2012, to have a far reaching effect of it approaching a far greater audience. The article of Yiyao from *China Daily* reports:

> Following the success of *Cats*, *Phantom of the Opera* also made $5.6bn worldwide, sold 5,000 tickets in five hours when a production in Shanghai was announced. (Yiyao)

British theatre received a great push and lots more benefits with the new tax incentives that had a unique combination of commercial competitiveness and cultural exchange that supported for global success. Undoubtedly, the British theatre companies achieved great
fame and gained a lot profit; like the Royal Shakespeare Company (RSC) did in both New York and Beijing.

Strange enough that the production and installation cost for a show in New York is four times higher than of London which results into the consequences that many more shows transfer from the West End to Broadway than vice versa. To cite from Cox’s article of *Variety*:

The Royal Shakespeare Company’s *Matilda* musical, which transferred in 2013, has made over $16 million in just 19 months on Broadway, making it one of New York’s most successful shows. Another performance from the RSC that followed the footstep of *Matilda* is *Wolf Hall* that again was one of the most successful plays of 2015. (Cox)

The RSC also played on forefront in the growing theatre industry of China. In September 2014, it received a £1.5m government grant to translate Shakespeare’s plays into Mandarin and fourteen Chinese plays into English. With its trading income raised till 45% in 2014, the Royal Shakespeare Company has opened up new commercial opportunities and retrieved new markets with the help of new government grants.

### 4.4 Landmarks in the Field of Theatre Productions:

“The fate of our times is characterized by rationalization and intellectualization and, above all, by the ‘disenchantment of the world’.”(Gerth and Mills, 155) For Weber, disenchantment follows from the relentless accumulation of ‘[t]echnical means and calculations’ (139) in the modern society and this triggers a ‘retreat’ of certain ‘values’
from the public space but the situation prepared a background for innovations and renovations in the forms till date.

The 21st Century not only witnessed establishment of various theatrical companies but also paved way to the development of numerous theatrical forms that thoroughly changed the conceptual understandings and established setups. There are a few names, listed here, which can be mentioned as the landmarks in the theatrical field that completely altered the focus and experience of the performers and performances.

4.4.1 Cameron Mackintosh:

Cameron Mackintosh Limited is one of the largest theatre productions. Cameron owns eight historic theatres in heart of London, the West End: Price Edward Theatre, Queen’s Theatre, Noël Coward Theatre, Novello Theatre, Wyndham's Theatre, Prince of Wales Theatre, Gielgud Theatre and the recent addition, Victoria Palace Theatre. Owner Cameron Mackintosh is one of the world’s leading and highly successful producers, spending more than £40 million emphasizing upon spectacular refurbishments and the best facilities of his venues comforting the 21st century audiences.

The most recent acquisition, the Victoria Palace Theatre, has just undergone a major revamping, prior to its reopening in November, 2017 with the Tony Award and Pulitzer Prize winning American musical, Hamilton, jointly ventured with the original American producers. Coping with the recent trends as immersive theatre and increased international touring rapidly transforming the industry, Cameron Mackintosh’s decision to renovate the theatres from the inside out is well thought investment.

Cameron Mackintosh is the leading theatrical company with the record of producing more musicals than anyone else for last 50 years that includes the three longest-running
musicals till date; *Cats, Les Misérables* and *The Phantom of the Opera*. These plays still make extraordinary business all over the world. In fact, *Les Misérables* is one of the longest-running musical in the world and the original is now in its 32\textsuperscript{nd} year in London.

Till date, Cameron has received worldwide recognition and many awards for the service rendered in the field of theatre including the 1996 New Year's Honours. In addition to that, Cameron was the first British Producer who got elected for the Broadway Theatre Hall of Fame. In fact, to describe the company in a few words one may quote Rothstein: Cameron Mackintosh is the most successful, influential and powerful theatrical producer in the world. (Rothstein)

**4.4.2 Neal Street Productions:**

Neal Street Productions is one of the UK's most respected independent production companies, producing film, television and theatre. Originally set up in 1999, Neal Street Productions had a major shift in 2003 when the producers, Pippa Harris and Caro Newling joined hands with Sam Mendes, the famous director of *Skyfall* and James Bond movie, *Spectre*.

Neal Street Productions launched *The Bridge Project* in 2009 that opened the doors of co-production of plays between The Old Vic in London and BAM in New York. As a result, Neal Street became a gateway for the transfer of a number of London’s most successful productions to New York, naming *Enron, Red* and *Merrily We Roll Along* and vice versa with the transfer of the $24m *Shrek: The Musical*.

Neal Street is a unique production house generating a big amount of revenue from international sources. September, 2014 indicated brighter chances for the increment and development of international touring with 25\% tax relief on touring theatre productions.
This not only increased the revenue but also increased the number of shows that transfer to the UK from America, such as *The Scottsboro Boys*, a musical qualifying for a £120,000 rebate. This has always been the area of expertise of Neal Street Productions.

This is the company who works on ground level and excels on both the sides: the West End and the Broadway. His memorable productions include the titles like: *The Hound of the Baskervilles* (2007), *Shrek the Musical* (2008), *The House of Special Purpose* (2009), *Mary Stewart on Broadway* (2009), *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory* (2013) and the recent one, *The Ferryman* (2017). Neel Street Production expanded its reach with the collaboration with All3Media that is governed by Discovery Communications along with Liberty Global in 2015.

### 4.4.3 Digital Theatre:

Digital Theatre, launched in 2009, is an online video on demand service which allows users to watch productions from various London theatres. The initiative was obviously a bit difficult but the prospective profit was quite visible and as a result, it received a £750,000 investment from one of the UK’s leading media funds, managed by The Ingenious Group. To add up to that, as per the report of *The Telegraph*, the Chief Executive of Ingenious, Patrick McKenna invested £250,000 of his own.

Digital Theatre has secured international rights for its productions and has access to a vast audience. Its archive includes variety of productions from London’s Globe Theatre as well as sell-out productions such as The Young Vic’s *A Doll’s House*. Gradually, Digital Theatre has encompassed its reach and has added several new revenue streams that even added up an educational subscription service called Digital Plus that has been offered to schools and have reached to more than 2 million students by now.
Digital Theatre has not limited itself to the UK theatres only rather it has also partnered with Qatar Ministry of Culture to film theatrical productions from the United Arab Emirates and provided access to these productions to an international audience. In 2015, Digital Theatre added up the Old Vic Theatre to its list of partner organizations and expanded its range of telecast. Simultaneously, the Digital Theatre Plus has also expanded its reach within numerous schools through a partnership with academic publisher Routledge.

4.4.4 1927:

Many theatre companies employ animation along with video projection but none has the excellence as the British troupe called 1927. The company has excelled in retrieving the vintage style and combined it with sophisticated technology carving out a unique niche in the theatre.

1927 is a great combination of performance, live music and animation; everything comes together. It was in 2005 that an excellent animator and outstanding illustrator Paul Barritt joined hands with writer cum actor Suzanne Andrade and come up with the company 1927. It was further supported with the joining of wonderful performer Esme Appleton to reach to the top. Last but not the least was Lillian Henley, composer and pianist who in a way completed this group. Since 2005, 1927 makes people wonder what happens when excellent performance, incredible live music and latest animation techniques unite.

1927 premiered with Between the Devil and the Deep Blue Sea at the Edinburgh Festival Fringe and unexpectedly the debut performance won a whopping 5 awards. Obviously, a flood of offers for international touring surrounded 1927 and it came to the offer of more than £50 to play down the local working man's club. Within 3 years, the show was
presented over 2 sell-out London seasons; toured throughout the UK and internationally; received the Peter Brook Empty Space Award for Best Ensemble along the way and if one emphasis upon analysing the journey till date, since 2007, 1927 has presented its live work in 118 venues & festivals in 35 countries across 5 continents with numerous nominations and achieving more than 10 awards with viewership of more than 500,000 people.

In 2010, 1927 come up with their next album *The Animals and Children took to the Streets*, premiered at Sydney Opera House. Though the company had a doubt on the success of the show, the show was presented over 400 times in 80 venues across 28 countries including 3 seasons at the National Theatre London. It also won the OFFIE Award for Best Entertainment.

1927 shook hands with Komische Opera Berlin to reshape and revive *The Magic Flute* in 2012. With its first premiere in Berlin, the show won 2 Opera World Awards; had consistent demand for the performances in repertoire and 3 new productions at Los Angeles Opera, Deutsche Opera Rhein and Minnesota Opera.

1927’s third show - Golem, premiered at Salzburg State Theatre with the collaboration of Salzburg Festival, Théâtre de la Ville Paris & Young Vic Theatre on the Salzburg Festival on 22nd August 2014. Over the period 2016-2017, ‘1927 toured across the UK and internationally; creating a re-imagined double bill of Ravel's opera *L'Enfant et les Sortileges* and Stravinsky's ballet *Petrushka* re-imagined as a heddy mix of circus, animation and a live orchestra and premiered at Komische Oper Berlin along with three new productions of *The Magic Flute* running in Madrid, Helsinki and Warsaw’. (About 1927) The development for the new works to be premiered in 2019 & 2021 is still in the pipeline.
1927, basically from Margate and London, is an Associate Company of the HOME Manchester, Young Vic Theatre and Resident Artists at Stratford Circus. Its use of cutting-edge technology has turned it into such a form of theatre that will definitely sustain in the industry and would turn into a quite reliable source of revenue generation from international tours with the assistance of the UK government tax relief bill.

4.5 Immersive Theatre:

Punchdrunk, one of the leading experimental British theatre companies, pioneered a completely new form of theatrical presentation, i.e. Immersive theatre. However, the initial was a bit difficult phase but it was in 2014 when the commercial potential of immersive theatre became quite apparent.

To explain the form in simple words, Immersive Theatre is all about creating participative experience where the spectators are no more “the silent observer” rather they become co-actors and co-creators of the narrative and of the storytelling process. The audience members are action wise performers who guide the story, take decisions, chose from infinite options and negotiate the process.

Audiences are inside the space, walking through site-specific installations; selecting the scenes to watch, change or elaborate the text; creating movements and physically responding to the actions to create site-responsive theatre. As a result, the performance would never be the same.

4.5.1 Companies Producing Ground breaking Immersive Theatre:

All thanks to the leading experimental companies like Punchdrunk and Secret Cinema, Immersive productions have paved their way into the mainstream theatrical presentations
and have plenty of intriguing shows opening up in leading theatres of London in last few years. Along with these two major companies, dreamthinkspeak, Fruit for the Apocalypse, pd3, You Me Bum Bum Train are a few other theatrical production companies who have done appreciative works in the format.

4.5.2 Punchdrunk:

The Artistic Director Felix Barrett founded a theatre company called Punchdrunk in 2000 that pioneered a completely new variant of presentation or performance known as "immersive" theatre. The format is close to "promenade theatre" and preferred to be termed as "site-sympathetic" presentation by Felix Barrett. The intension behind this specific form was to liberate the audience to choose what and where to watch.

A typical Punchdrunk production provides space to the audience members to roam freely around the performance site that can be as large as a five-story industrial warehouse. Either the audience would grab a character or one of the themes of the play, as it deals with multiple threads interwoven intricately. The best part is to explore the world created by these artistic minds to fit in the incidents.

One of the unique identification of Punchdrunk is the provision of Mask. Audiences are provided with masks to wear so as to wander freely through huge, lavish set ups, having a conversation with the crew and with the least concern of identity. In an interview with Antonia Wilson, Barret says:

The most interesting moment came when we introduced masks, suddenly inhibition fell away and people found a sense of freedom in their anonymity, allowing them to fully explore.
their surroundings and become totally absorbed in the world around them. (Wilson)

Higgins cites Former Secretary of State for Culture James Purnell who called Punchdrunk, an example of "access and excellence" in modern British theatre. (Higgins)

As per the data of Annual Report 2013-14, Punchdrunk’s show, *The Drowned Man*, was supported by the National Theatre and sold more than 157,000 tickets. As Punchdrunk’s productions have been supported by arts funding in the UK, similarly in New York, they have been produced by Emursive. Punchdrunk’s *Sleep No More* was one of the most expensive Off-Broadway Productions of all times, costing $10m but it has been consistently sold-out for 3 years and now returns an annual profit (Slade). Presently, the recent production of Punchdrunk, *Kabeiroi*, is making great profit. The tickets are sold in week advance and this adventure for two people turns the streets of London into a platform station. A story inspired from Greek Myth of *Lemnos* is a perfect combination of gaming, touring and storytelling with a six-hour experience at a mysterious place in Bloomsbury.

Alongside, Emursive has added new ventures to the site of the show, including a 140-seat restaurant, a rooftop bar and a music venue that have become popular entertainment venues in their own right.

Additionally, Punchdrunk has used its skills to create experiences for brands such as Playstation and Stella Artois. It has also launched an educational experience at the National Maritime Museum, revealing the versatility of immersive theatre by creating new value for existing organizations.

Simultaneously, immersive theatre has performed a few variants for school kids to enhance their interest in the various necessary components; *Under the Eiderdown* (2009),
a theatrical experience to visit a magical bric-a-brac shop, encouraging an interest in creative writing; *The Lost Lending Library* (2013), an immersive experience regarding love for books; *Against Captain's Orders: A Journey into the Uncharted* (2015), an immersive exhibition at the National Maritime Museum in London.

### 4.5.3 Secret Cinema:

Secret Cinema, founded in 2007, created a whole new world of experience for the immersive theatre. It launched the form with such grassroots deviations that it brought 360 degree upside down understanding in the participatory boundaries of spectator turned actor. The places for performances of Secret Cinema varies from deserted houses to huge production installations in some of the most wonderful sites around the globe.

Secret Cinema got established and shaped by Fabien Riggall; the one who had formed Punchdrunk only seven years back. The Company set a trend of using live performance for immersive screenings of classic films, such as *Blade Runner* in the set of a future city and *Ghostbusters* in a tropical garden. Consecutively, Secret Cinema became instrumental for the other entertainment industries.

Film producers could make out an entertaining and profitable way of publicity through Secret Cinema performances. Right from the screening of *The Third Man* (2011) in Kabul and London simultaneously, till the latest one, *Maulin Rouge* (2017) received great response for the preview performances of the movies with exclusive rights. A record breaking screening of *Back to the Future* to an audience of 80,000 made the Secret Cinema heartthrob of immersive theatre.

Adding up to the movie screenings, Secret Cinema joined hands with Virgin Records to coordinate a series of concerts for the English folk artist, Laura Marling that were as
theatrical as they were musical. The concert being a great hit and the sales having tripled within a decade and still growing, Secret Music offered various artists chance to extend their offering, achieve even bigger heights and cover larger audience.

Along with the music, Secret Cinema has planned for its Secret Restaurant venture that will not only offer food but also allow people to undergo a thrilling theatrical experience. Punchdrunk’s 140-seats restaurant, ‘The Heath’, has already cleared the potential for Secret Restaurant and thriving through this venture, the company would add another bow to its revenue stream.

4.5.4 Dream Think Speak:

Since its formation in 1999, dreamthinkspeak has been one of the major pioneers of “site-responsive” performance. This UK-based company creates immersive and site-specific works at various provocative locations, implying audio-visual technology alongside art installations and live actors. Director Tristan Sharps draws inspiration not only from great works of fiction and historical events but also from performances all over the world.

The performance links theatrical experience along with film and installations to create extraordinary journeys that are ambitious in scale, visually layered and popular with audiences not only within UK but also across the globe. The performances till date have utilized numerous places adding up physical and architectural contexts from the former Co-op department store in Brighton, an underground abattoir in Clerkenwell, a disused paper factory in Moscow and the Old Treasury Building in Perth, Australia. (dreamthinkspeak)

The leading performances include: One Day, Maybe inspired by the Gwangju Uprising, performed at an abandoned South Korean school; Don’t Look Back, the storyline is an
adoption of Orpheus and Eurydice myth; the performances were conducted at 12 sites that included a factory, a Treasury building, a hotel and many more. dreamthinkspeak is proud to be associate artists of the Brighton Dome and the Festival LIFT (London International Festival of Theatre).

4.5.5 Fruit for the Apocalypse:

Fruit for the Apocalypse is the production house that creates and presents innovative audio-kinetic adventures in Opera, Ballet and Composition work, collaborating with new artists in a site-responsive context.

It is a venture of collective efforts by artists and producers making experimental work. The name is derived from a tin of peaches; the symbol indicates eternity of ephemeral potential, restricted within a cautious, nihilistic and consumer packaged society. It is based between London and Rotterdam, developing work at both cities.

Fruit for the Apocalypse is famous for its best known performance till date, The Surrealist Taxi. It’s a 24/7 performance project where potential audience members call for a cab, get picked up and select from a deck of hand-drawn playing cards to determine the length and direction of their drive. It has been going on all over Europe since 2010. An appreciative work from Fruit for the Apocalypse is The Ballad of Skinny Lattes and Vintage Clothing, a six-movement “noise opera” applying the best urban sounds and non-traditional venues commenting on gentrification in Europe.

4.5.6 Other Minor Production Houses:

In addition to these leading production houses, there were a few companies who tried to contribute on their own level to the immersive theatre. One such is London-based creative
agency PD3 that produced an immersive theatre entitled *Grimm’s Tales*. PD3 more frequently produces experiential immersive advertisements for leading brands such as O2 and Nike that may herald a new and more profitable era for immersive theatre.

2015 witnessed ground breaking immersive production of *Alice’s Adventures Underground* and *The Game’s Afoot* by theatre company, Les Enfants Terribles. Established in 2001 by an excellent artist and talented director Oliver Lansley; the company has acclaimed consistent critical appreciations. ‘Razor sharp theatre group Les Enfants Terribles’ (*The Telegraph*) is one of the leading, innovative and creative theatre companies working today. (Lansley, 15)

*If you want to see the future of British theatre now, then Coney is one of the companies to watch...* (Gardner, Early Days…) Gardner very bluntly asserts this in his article in *The Guardian*. Coney are interactive theatre-makers. Coney, the title, was actually adopted in 2006 but there are a few pieces that were worked out in early 2004 and years before that too. They create such games, adventures and plays wherein people choose when and where to participate. That’s the reason that they are never in need of typical kind of a theatrical space or stage; rather they begin wherever they manage the gathering; the feeling of excitement, curiosity and fondness for theatre turns any place into theatres, whether a college compound or a hotel or museum. The space hardly matters.

They make plays with ideas inspired through the world around us, ranging from the everyday to the extraordinary. These works provide an inspiration that the world can be truly a magical place where ordinary people can do extraordinary things.

DifferencEngine is an Off West End theatre company that deals with immersive & interactive theatre productions. In 2014, it was initiated with the joint efforts of Jon
Cooper & Andrew Somerville. *Heist*, the debut show, was premiered to run for three weeks, instead, it ran for nine months and sold out in minutes that shocked audiences and partners alike. It witnessed audiences breaking into a building, interacting through headsets & cameras and attempting to steal a painting without being caught.

### 4.6 The Future of Spectacle

The present year, 2017 has been till date quite promising as well as hectic in terms of theatrical writings and presentations. The contemporary theatre engages multiple threads and has variety of performances for each age group, gender; political, economic, social or culturally varied classes. It is engrossed with metaphysical imagination, class politics, violence, middle class voices, language games and obviously, the innovative, immersive theatre.

British theatre has remained incredibly rich this year with numerous immersive performances from different theatre companies like Secret Cinema, Punchdrunk, Les Enfants Terribles, Coney, PD3, Dreamthinkspeak and many more. These companies endeavour hard to cultivate and satisfy the city’s taste for immersive theatre.

The digital entertainment & media sector will grow twice as fast as UK GDP. The UK sector will grow at a compound rate of 3% per annum over the next 5 years to be worth £72 billion by 2021. (The 2017 UK entertainment and media outlook)

The greater emphasis put on the diversity of forms reflected in Arts Council England’s funding decisions for its National Portfolio Organizations from 2018 to 2022. The significant change is the welcoming of a substantial number of newcomers into the portfolio. (Gardner). Naming a few, the Bush theatre got 20% increase, Talawa theatre and Tricycle theatre uplifted 18% and 14% respectively while Hampstead theatre has a
decrease of 14% and the National Theatre, Southbank Centre, Royal Opera, Royal Shakespeare Company – all faced cuts of 3 to 4%.

The status and stature of audience has gone under a thorough change. Through fundings and production costs, the theatre has been converted into a quite comfortable and audience friendly space. Technically advanced and supported theatres and contemporary way of presentations have completely subverted the face of British theatre.

4.7 Theatre Studies:

Theatre studies is an interdisciplinary field, encompassing the relation of theatre to social, historical, literary and other contexts, as well as semiotics and aesthetics. These studies not only works on the production aspects for the classics or the modern but it also focuses on the creativity level of both writing as well as performance.

The universities offer students unique opportunities to study and interpret the rich world of drama, with specializations in Acting; Artisanry and Craft Design; Playwriting and Screenwriting; Theatre Arts Management; Theatre Design and Technology; Theatre History; Literature and Criticism; Theatrical Production; Dance, Design and Applied Arts; Fine Arts and Studio Art; Musical Arts; Photography, Film, and Video; Visual and Performing Arts; and many more.

Across the globe, the UK is considered the pram of contemporary theatre and the heaven for anyone interested in the study or research in theatre or drama. Because of its royal lineage of great writers like Shakespeare, Marlowe, Beckett, Eliot and more, United Kingdom, specifically London, the hub of theatrical activities, is believed to be not only a place to enjoy a theatrical experience but to study and become a scholar too.
The UK has a wide range of courses being dealt by large number of universities throughout the continent. Analyzing availability of courses of in the universities of the UK only: there are more than 238 Postgraduate courses of Theatre and Drama Studies offered by approximately 75 institutions; 703 Bachelor's Degrees courses being dealt by more than 117 institutions; 61 undergraduate certificates & diplomas courses are there in 24 institutions; 86 vocational courses are being taught in 21 institutions; and minimum 40 Doctoral Degree courses in Theatre and Drama Studies are suggested by no less than 31 institutions. Along with these full time courses, there are a few universities that offer online or part-time courses in theatre studies.

Under the guidance and training of these universities, students turn out to be scholars and enlightened artists who utilize the form of theatre with the concerns of humanity at large with an approach to analyse and explore the horizons of human psyche through the art forms. Through such courses students not only have amazing access to theatre resources that professionals have but also receive the guidance from seasoned actors or directors leading them towards the destiny, i.e. the stage.

4.8 Theatre and Society – The Concluding Remarks:

What is literature? What is its function? How society is connected to it? Why at all do human/society need literature? There are a number of such questions that hit human mind; specifically in the times where people hardly need a theatre as an instrument of entertainment cause of many more options available.

The history charts right through the rise of human civilization. The individuals formed groups and these groups came together to form a society with the primary intension of fulfilling human needs. Setting aside for a while the question regarding which came first
— theatre or society — one thing is for sure that the purpose of a writer is to reflect the social image as both, theatre and society, have remained inextricable because theatre cannot exist without society and wise a versa the society too cannot be untouched by any literary piece written during the times directly or indirectly.

Analysing the history of any society, one would realize that the society pass through various phases right from the Pre-societal ages to the modern Technical age. The lifestyle, beliefs, religion, cultures, understandings etc. hardly remain consistent. Owing to the changes of time, space and situation, the societies have to leave the stubbornness and modify their rules and values; and as being the reflective and representative literature does interpret it in its various forms. At the same time, the place and importance of literature has not remained same through all these ages.

The 21st century being the age of Digitalization and of collaborative activities, all the arts and creative industries faced a kind of a setback to some extent; somehow, theatre is believed to be the most effected form. Social media is all set to provide innovative experiences to connect and collaborate without any mediator (the artists or professionals); being spontaneous, unpredictable and with least restrictions of place (indoors/outdoors, public/private), time or platform. Listening to or making music; reading or writing a novel or watching television; being globally connected; everything has been on the tip of a finger recently.

None the less, the business of the creative sectors has been terrifically affected with the churn evolved due to the digital revolution, economic crisis and the impacts of climate change but the theatre had least impact from the perspective of profitability. There are more theatres opened and variety of forms emerged during these years. Then the question comes up in the mind obviously regarding the factors that helped theatre to sustain even
in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. How come the classical or Shakespearean tragedies and comedies still affect the audiences; and people flock to participate in the creative experience in the West End, Broadway, at international festivals and various spaces.

What are the factors that make theatre so attractive that can grab the attention of almost all age groups and gender? How is it possible that the audience of modern and post-modern age comfort themselves with the writ-ups of the 5<sup>th</sup> century BC? Why do people still participate in theatrical activities while they have so many more social media or gathering options? These are not all; the most surprising is the increasing number of the departments in various universities dealing with the courses regarding theatrical writings or performances and the number of students rushing up for these courses. Through answering these queries, one might be able to understand how theatre could still sustain in the present world too and could retain a definite space for itself.

Analysing the journey of theatre right from the times (the 5<sup>th</sup> century and before that) when it was not the one (theatre as expected or accepted nowadays) but a religious ceremony or celebration till the present times (the 21<sup>st</sup> century), one thing is for sure that there has been hardly any society where there was complete absence of theatre (even in the Puritan age, when theatres were closed forcefully, secret writings and performances were happening.). Alongside, not a single form or style has remained consistent till date or even for different ages. To put it in other words, one may rightly say that theatre is a space where the director or the artists create a world for himself/themselves that he/they want to live in. To be more specific, theatre is a small world for rehearsal to implement something in the outside real world.

In fact, what theatre actually does? It truly tries to give voice to the dead. There is a blank page where a few could not complete their sentences. A few could not get the chance to
hold a pen to express their views. A few were in such a position that they had less space or existence in front of the gigantic figures. Theatre draws the picture of the society that truly existed or ideally expected to be. In both the sense, it does reflect the times in the best possible manner.

Theatre has always been reflecting directly or indirectly the incidents or happening of the times from different perspectives and also variety of thoughts passing through the mind of many people and that turn any literary work an important document for reference. In other words, just like a history book, every society gets its mirror image in the literary works of the times and specifically the form, theatre because it is the most connecting form affecting larger mass of the society. In fact, exploring the theatre simply means drawing on history, psychology, sociology, philosophy and almost every aspect that is connected with the human life and human do think of it as literature is only a reflection of human thoughts.

Theatre, being a reflection or reaction of the happening around or in human psyche, it can never sustain with a typical form of writing or way of presentation. The changes in the class hierarchy, economical structures, development of various fields; changes in the reign of king or queen, impact of religion and many more factors affect the work of a typical era and that is the base for the consistent development of theatre. To put it in other words, it can be rightly expressed that theatre continually evolves in response to changing social, political and cultural landscapes and every society, whether it be the Greeks or the 20th Century, theatrical performance continues to find new forms, new sites, new audience and new subject matter resulting into the new way/s of treatment to the changing scenario.
These changes in the society and other factors, in true sense, supply the reason and motivation for the upgradation of the theatrical form and presentation. Right from the Greek times, theatre has been an integral part of society and even in the 20th century, with its renewed version, expressing the current issues it has still sustained and maintained position; from almost all the perspectives; whether be it in terms of forms of writing or presentations or number of theatres opening day by day and from the academic interest increasing gradually and research being conducted in the area and so on.

Passing through these many stages, theatre as a form has not only changed in numerous ways but has also matured with the society. In fact, the exchange, happening between theatre and society is inseparable as the one is responsive and responsible for the development and changes happening to both.

Critically evaluating the 20th century, it not only brought drastic changes in the historical scenario but also generated upside down differences in the established literary forms. The uncertainty, disillusion, pessimism, psychological issues, technological advances, space exploration, threat of nuclear and germ warfare etc. made life of people complicated and frustrated but at the same time this situation stirred the great minds and there emerged a large number of literary forms.

The form, theatre, evolved and imbibed a shape reflecting the times as Aristotle had prepared a model of writing from the write-ups already available. The changes of times brought drastic alteration in the norms and form too. Whether it’s the time of Shakespeare or the 20th century, theatre has brought drastic changes in the established notions of theatrical representations laid down by classical scholars/philosophers. The previous chapters have already discussed regarding the factors responsible for the emergence of
these new form and also the reasons why classical models were not in the position to satisfy the need of the times.

To put it in fewer words, one may simply argue that the norms of classical Greek could hardly fit in to the chaotic, cruel, sense-less world of the 20th century where people faced two world wars and nuclear attacks on humanity. To reflect that chaos of society there was a need/demand for the changes in structure, language as well as presentation that can truly mirror the senselessness of the norm-less society of the times.

However, just replicating the happening of the world around doesn’t finish up the task of literature. Right from the beginning, theatre has been a tool of instruction through entertainment. It has been instrumental in bringing about the intended changes in the society and same expectations were carried quite successfully in the 20th century where various forms reacted against the evils of the society and narrated the intended changes. Street theatres, women’s theatre, LGBT, Workers theatre were among few who brought realism to the theatrical narration and made the society aware regarding the need of the times.

Actually, when a person begins reading or viewing a play, he/she knows it quite well that the dramatic experience is not absolutely real in a sense that, for example, the actor playing Macbeth does not truly die or truly see a dagger flying in the air or the actor playing Lady Macbeth doesn’t see blood on her hands. The play, in fact, imitates these imagined actions; but when it’s done with perfection it does effect the human mind. That really makes one frighten even if only for a fleeting moment but that does make one believe that such things could be real.
One can draw significance from the actions of Hamlet; his actions help one live his/her life more deeply, more intensely because they give an insight into the possibilities of life. Human are restricted to live a typical kind of a life; drama is an art form that helps to realize the potential of life, for both good and bad. In an important sense, one can share the experience of a character such as Hamlet when he soliloquized over the question of whether it is better to die than to live in the world filled with sin and crime. And here lies the universal effect of a form of writing where it can connect with any human, living in any time, belonging to any age group or class or religion. In fact, theatre affect and reflect human lives in such a depth that going through a work of theatre can be of great help to analyse history, psychology, sociology, philosophy or any other aspect that form any society at larger level.

At the same time, theatre can never be restricted through time or boundary and it do represent humanity at large. Most of the times it is intercultural and international so by going through a piece of work one will learn not only about theatre as a confined world, but also about theatre as a representation of culture, psychology and different philosophies. In fact, going through a range of modern and contemporary theatre and performance practices, one would get the touch of international trends and global developments and of key debates within the Humanities.

To put it in simple words, in the process of searching one of the forgotten pleasures of time; though being in constant access to information; secrets, fusing film, music, art and dance; theatre emphasised upon creating a substitute to fill the gap emerged out of the over-saturated world of machine that was in need of a humane Feel;

One has to accept that theatre is as huge and extended as the horizons of the sky and it’s difficult to encompass everything. It’s as gigantic as life itself and no research can be
called the final one. The topic has still many more areas to get discovered. The age dealt here, the 20th century, undoubtedly, was quite chaotic but taking a note of theatrical advancements it can be called the second best time after the Shakespearean Age.

The Renaissance or the Elizabethan period is definitely given the label of the Golden era for theatrical writing, specifically because of the playwrights like Shakespeare and the university wits; the thematic concerns and the air of renaissance reflected in the plays that sustained the blows of times and are still performed and enjoyed even by the audiences of the 21st century.

The last century excelled this genre called theatre in such a manner that the time witnessed emergence of numerous form of writings; playwrights dealing with experimentations; the opening of various theatre companies; the form coming out of the theatre houses and excelling on the streets too; getting the audiences from milliners to the beggar; this form has made a remarkable impact and that impact has truly created the Golden times for the it. To add up to this, it is not restricted to the 20th century only but one has to bear one thing in mind that the Golden time has just begun. The more one gets inside it, the more he/she would get.

To describe in literary way, research in theatre is like diving into a deep sea. The deeper you go, the more wonders you find. The same way, this research opens up gateways for many further issues needed to be discussed in great detail. To mention a few: a detailed study on Immersive theatre, Street Play: the form and its applications, Technical advancements and theatrical: a positive impact, Theatre Studies: Courses and Scope, A Comparative analysis of the Broadway and the West End, and many more. And all these research areas have definite future implications as none of these is a study for its sake only but it definitely contributes to the society and at large humanity.
To conclude the writing, it can definitely be asserted that there is no dead end for theatre; at large literature at any point of technical of scientific advancements. Till there are human on the earth, there will be theatre because of the very mimetic instinct of human. Human loves being watched and till the time human lives in the society, people would have gatherings and there will be theatre. To quote Peter Brook:

I can take any empty space and call it a bare stage. A man walks across this empty space whilst someone else is watching him, and this is all that is needed for an act of theatre to be engaged. (Brook, 7)
References:


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