TRANSCRIPT OF INTERVIEW
with HOWARD TEICHMANN

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for the

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HT: --end of the Federal Theatre. It was in existence when I came to New York, but I went directly into the spinoff of the Federal Theatre, which was the Mercury Theatre. Both Orson Welles and John Houseman had been products of the Federal Theatre. Hallie Flanagan who was, I believe, the head of the Federal Theatre, had hired Houseman as a teacher for a few years up at Smith, was it?

JO: Vassar.

HT: Vassar. I knew it was one of the seven sisters. And a number of plays they had done in Federal Theatre they did in repertory in the Mercury: Horse Eats Hat, Cradle Will Rock, Dr. Faustus, that sort of thing. Everybody, well almost everybody, with few exceptions, from the Mercury had been part of the Federal Theatre. And they still spoke in Federal Theatre jargon and I sort of thought my life wasn't quite complete if I hadn't been with the Federal Theatre. When did it end, 1939?

JO: Sometime then.

HT: There was a great moaning and bewailing that the Federal Theatre had come to the end,on the people in the Mercury Theatre. By then, of course, the people in the Mercury Theatre had become anywhere from fabulously successful to relatively successful. And they all felt, from what I could tell--now this is just my feeling about how they felt. They felt that if you were any good, you would get out of the Federal Theatre and get into the Broadway theatre. Just the way if you're any good in football at college, you are picked up by a pro team. And those who just remain back there didn't have much to offer. And I must say I got that attitude from them. Projects that they had conceived in the Federal Theatre were done in the Mercury. Not just productions, but ideas. They had an idea of doing a play called

Too Much Johnson. And in the summer of 1938 the Mercury began a production of Too Much Johnson to be part film, part live theatre. And we shot the film down in Pachin Place in the Village. Joe Cotten was to be the star of Too Much Johnson. Somehow we never quite got it to work. We rehearsed it, we filmed the film portions of it, but we never got around to it. Joe Cotten had been a New York actor long before the Federal Theatre had come in. The second season of the Mercury began with not Too Much Johnson, which seemed to just expire, but a production they had discussed earlier and decided to go ahead with called Danton's Death,and I became the stage manager of that production. Now they had been accustomed to doing a great deal with a very small amount of money because the Federal Theatre was not funded the way the National Endowment for the Arts is funded today or the way the Anti-Pollution Campaign or even the Solar Energy Campaign is funded. I mean, they really had a small amount of money. As a matter of fact, the first big hit of the Mercury, Julius Caesar, they just had enough money to rent the theatre, paint the back wall red, have two platforms and buy a winter coat for Orson. Everybody wore his own clothes, no costumes. And they had five hits that season. I think three or four of them were brought over from the Federal Theatre and produced, as I say, in repertory by the Mercury.

We did Danton's Death and I remember--and I will, I suppose, if I don't go senile--to my dying day, the first line of the review in the New York Times. Brooks Atkinson wrote, "For the Mercury Theatre, the honeymoon is over." And that was that. Again we had no costumes except a few, and it was a production without a stage. We literally tore up the floorboards on the stage and built an elevator that could go up to stage level or four stories above stage level. And Martin Gabel, who might be of help to you, played

the title role.

I remember very clearly that when the Federal Theatre went down the drain, there was great rending of garments, figuratively speaking, and beating of breasts and sackcloth and ashes and, oh, "This must not go on, this is a terrifying thing." I mean,"This is Fascism, this is the end of a great movement." But by then, as I told you, Orson was living high off the hog and Jack was living sort of down around the middle. And the rest of us were living reasonably well. But nobody raised a finger, to the best of my memory—that's a long time ago, but to the best of my memory nobody raised a single finger to stop federal funding of the Federal Theatre. It just went the way of all flesh, and I remember—didn't Brehon Somervell take over?

JO: Yes, but I think that was the Recreation Project.

HT: I remember that during the war I served under Lieutenant General Somervell and a great many of my friends from the Mercury were horrified that I would dare serve under this terrible man. And I kept explaining you didn't have a choice in the United States Army. You did what you were told to do. And Somervell never mentioned it to me and certainly I didn't mention it to Somervell, who was a crack politician when it came to soldiering.

JO: Yes. I think that was his crime on the WPA (Works Progress Administration) was that it could be in a military way and it was so inefficient and unsimple that he became a problem in the Federal Theatre.

HT: Well, he—in the theatre you ask people, you cajole them, you try to reason with them, you beg, you plead. The last resort is threaten but you never give direct orders because it just doesn't work that way. And General Somervell was a West Point graduate and was used to the chain of command and

the direct order. I don't know what else—

JO: Were you here for Cradle Will Rock?

HT: The Cradle Will Rock? Yes. It was running then at the National Theatre, now the Billy Rose Theatre, now sort of no theatre at all. It's in disrepair, but I was here then.

JO: And as stage manager, what were some of the duties?

HT: Well, the stage manager has to normally attend all rehearsals, keep the script, make all changes and crosses and exits and entrances, control the stagehands, fly in the drops, fly them out, turn on the lights, take them down, take them to a half reading or a quarter reading. You had to send your assistant to the various dressing rooms of the actors and knock on the door and say, "Half hour," tell them it's a half hour before curtain time and they'd better get dressed and made up. "Five minutes," you send them around to knock there. And you know, if it was "Five minutes, Mr. Welles," for the rest of them it was, "Hey, you, five minutes." Then you would send for them "On stage," and it was the stage manager who gave the direct order, one of the few direct orders in the theatre about "Take the house to half," "Kill it," "Raise the curtain," "Lower it." You decide on how many curtain calls are to be taken by the company. In the case of the Mercury Theatre, it was also sending out gofers for steak for Mr. Welles. Mr. Welles always had a double order of steak and a double order of French fries and a double order of ice cream from one of the little restaurants in New York. Mr. Welles always smoked Havana cigars which were purchased at the Astor Hotel counter, three at a time. You'd have to say, "Cigars for Mr. Welles." That's so everybody could hear these cigars were for Orson. But since I was very, very young and very new to the business and there was

a depression on, I was happy beyond belief to have a job.

JO: How'd you come to work for the Mercury Theatre?

HT: Well, that was a long, tedious story. I had come to work in New York. Someone promised me a job with a play, a musical produced by Max Gordon. And when I got here, the man I was to contact said, "What can I do for you?" And I said, "I'm supposed to work on the Max Gordon musical, the Oscar Hammerstein script."

And he said, "That show is in Philadelphia. It's ready to come in in two weeks." And I just walked the streets looking for a job and eventually I made my way to the Mercury Theatre and talked my way into a non-paying job. Everybody in the Mercury, you see, wanted to be an actor. I wanted to be a playwright, and I had stage-managed in college. So within three weeks I was stage-managing the entire company. That was no problem. I just swept—they wanted to act desperately. I wanted to write, but I'd been told—and properly so—that, you know, you can't arrive in New York and say, hang out a shingle, "Howard Teichmann,Playwright. Four flights up." It's not like a doctor. They don't come to you. So while you're learning the craft of the stage, you're also earning a living, which is what I did. And I'm very grateful to Orson and Jack for that training they gave me. I learned more, I believe, in four years there than in 20 years anywhere else because they were constantly experimenting, always trying something new, something different that would not fit into the conventional mold.

When I left Orson I began writing on my own, so there was no great problem. I had been writing--in the middle of my stage-managing career, Howard Koch wrote The War of the Worlds, and he got an offer to work for Warner Brothers and he left. And they farmed the script out to a professor at Columbia

University whose name I will not mention because he's still alive, and he did a wretched job. I had been writing little scenes or four or five lines for a scene and Houseman was the editor of the radio program which had then gotten a sponsor, Campbell Soup Company. And along about 2:00 in the morning we were working on a dramatization of the Wren novel, Beau Geste. Along about 2:00 in the morning, Houseman, who always worked in bed, sort of rolled over and said, "Carry on, boy." There was a secretary there and I worked until 8:30 in the morning when I woke up Houseman and said, "Here's the finished script." She typed it and I wrote it or vice versa. I wrote it and she typed it and I gave it to him. From then on I was the stage manager in the evening and during the day and late at night I wrote the radio scripts.

JO: Howard Koch has told me that that was,the deadline for that was one of the worst things he's done, facing the deadlines, the constant—you were describing staying up all night.

HT: Yes.

JO: How were scripts selected and modified and developed, both for the Mercury Theatre and the Theatre of the Air?

HT: Well, whatever they goddamn well chose to do, they would do. If they couldn't get the rights to something or if the rights were too expensive or were owned by a picture company, they'd do something in the public domain. And when he went commercial, he began getting stars and he had the money to pay for stars. Then you would select a property that the star could fit into. We did Private Lives with Gertrude Lawrence, the other two people, and Orson played the Noel Coward part. Now, Orson's technique had always been to have the scripts written in first person singular. But you can't have Orson do the narration

because Gertrude Lawrence would feel he has a bigger part. And you can't have either of the two supporting players play it because that would raise them to the level of Orson and Gertrude. So I invented a character, the guy who owned the hotel, a man named Jean Casimir Dupree, "I own a hotel in Switzerland. What happened to me shouldn't happen to a dog" or words to that effect, and he would narrate in first person singular. If we did Show Boat, we would be sure that before we did Show Boat that we had Edna Ferber to play Captain Andy's wife, Helen Morgan to play a part, Margaret Sullavan to play the ingenue, and Orson to play Gaylord Ravenal.

The scripts were always overwritten and we would do them right through the dress rehearsal, which always ended about 20 minutes before air. You see, they didn't have tape. You had to go live in those days. Petrillo's union said his musicians only played live. And Orson had a technique that I picked up readily and I must say I surpassed him at it, but it's his technique. We'd finish the dress rehearsal and Orson would say, "All right, kiddies, gather round me and I'll tell you what we can do to improve this." And the guy, the AD, the assistant director, who was timing the show, would come out and say, "Mr. Welles, you're 22 minutes and 15 seconds over long." And my job was to say, "All right. Stand by for cuts, everybody. From the middle of page six, all of page seven, all of page eight, to the top line of page nine out." And everybody would just hysterically pull those pages out. I'd say, "Okay. On page 20 and 21, out." I had to make sure--I did this beforehand, you see. I had timed these cuts beforehand and I made sure that Orson's part wasn't cut. That was the main thing. And that was the way it went. Nobody had time to protest like, "Listen, you've reduced me to four goddamn lines."

JO: How about plays, the live plays before the scripts were doctored? Were they changed much in rehearsal? /Plays like/ Danton's Death.

HT: Well, they were changed considerably. You see, Julius Caesar was done without an intermission. The whole thing ran an hour, an hour and 15 minutes. Now you can't read Julius Caesar out loud in that time. They slashed away mercilessly. Danton's Death was radically changed from the original or the German. A super-duper production that didn't come into New York called The Five Kings, Shakespeare's Richards and Henrys and put them into one. And this was an organization, the Mercury, that had always done things on a bare stage. Thornton Wilder got the idea after seeing Julius Caesar of doing Our Town on a bare stage, and he said it was very effective and he, of course, was right. Our Town is creditably a great play, I believe.

The play did, in collaboration, co-production, with the Theatre Guild, almost goddamn near broke the Theatre Guild. A turntable which had the Boar's Head Tavern, the streets of London, the throne room, the whole thing, and it was all—you cut down and you just take parts, certain parts of the Richards, certain parts of the Henrys. And it was a very elaborate costumed, heavily scenic designed thing that closed in Philadelphia. But again, ruthless cutting, and it was always successful until the second two years when it just didn't work.

JO: Did everybody, were there lots of unstated adaptions to Welles' personality in this thing? You talked about the cuts in the radio scripts and the cigars.

HT: Well, everybody was told when we came from the Federal Theatre, we were all on a level, you see. Everybody was just the same thing. We were all actors or stage managers or stagehands or press agents. Everybody was the same except Orson was more the same than anybody else. And there was no doubt

in anyone's mind that Orson was the big star. When I first met him, he was a year or two older than I am, and he was slim, with a big head and round cheeks and very boyish. And "boy genius" was a term if he didn't create, he didn't fight off. Today unfortunately the body has grown way out of proportion, maybe a glandular thing, I don't know. But he was an enormous eater even then. He lived in splendor. At the time of the doing of Too Much Johnson he claimed he had a terrible case of hay fever and had to live in a three-room, air-conditioned suite at the St. Regis. He was married to Virginia, a beautiful girl, and they lived at 322 East 57th Street in a duplex that was absolutely--you know, I'd never seen a duplex. I know it was all really, not that we were all one big, happy family. We were, but I knew that we were somewhat different because it was the tradition in the New York theatre then for the stage manager, after the Saturday matinee, to go to the box office where they had a lot of cash, and they would prepare envelopes with everybody's weekly salary and put it in a box, blue, as I recall. And I would go and distribute the salaries to everybody. Of course I knew, just from the feel of the envelope, that the stagehands, who had a very strong union, got a hell of a lot of money. I knew that Joe Cotten, Agnes Morehead, and Martin Gabel got $35 a week. That was Equity repertory minimum and we were in repertory. I knew the rest of the envelopes, everybody else in the company, was marked $15, but I knew from the kids they only got $8.00. I did get $15 and so I felt above them and could sympathize with them. But I knew Orson was just then walking around with--I knew that the money he got wouldn't pay for the suite at the St. Regis, limousines and things, you know. So the Federal Theatre spirit was maintained for a good number of years, if not the Federal Theatre prices.

JO: How about—Abe Feder didn't work—he had worked with the Welles group as a lighting person. When it became the Mercury Theatre, he didn't follow. It was Jean Rosenthal.

HT: No. Jeannie was a genius with lights and Abe talks like he's a genius today. In his own way he is. But Jeannie really had a feel for the kinds of things Orson wanted. And Orson wanted outrageously inventive lighting. Jeannie had studied at Yale and all over, and she was quite marvelous. You had to be a certain kind of personality to work with Orson. You either had to worship him or you had to meet him on an equal level, or you had to crumble. And a great many people, you know, would wind up with ulcers and he was a great one for giving them. He loved everybody but, boy, he was tough. "Who, me, tough? I'm a pussycat." You know, that was his thing. Abe was consulted from time to time if there was a problem Jeannie—you see, Orson was the kind of guy who would say, "Oh, Jeannie, you can't get that, eh? I've been asking for that effect for two days and you can't get it. Call Abe Feder." That was the—you know.

What David Merrick used to do to press agents-you see, he would hire four press agents and say, "You, you, you and you, see if you can get me—the one who gets me the cover of Time magazine, that's the one who's getting the raise. And maybe the other two I'll fire and I'll keep one of you on as his assistant." Orson in an earlier day did this. He played people off against each other and of course, Houseman, who found Orson and was president of the Mercury Theatre, lived in anguish, fear, and righteous indignation, I must say, that this creature, this Frankenstein he had built, had taken over. It was supposed to be the way it was in the Federal Theatre, all on one level. But Orson hired press agents, Orson gave interviews, Orson was

photographed, and Houseman was left there to run the operation. I remember, I wanted to get married to a girl I'd gone to school with and I was, as I told you, stage-managing and writing an hour-long radio show every week. And I got $15 for stage-managing and $15 for the radio show, and I knew this was patently unfair. And I got Houseman and Welles in a room once and I said, "Look, you know, I'm getting married and I want to have a wife and a home. And I don't think it's fair."

Houseman looked at me like I was peeing in front of the Queen. But Orson said, "How much do you make?"

I said, "$30 a week."

He said, "Outrageous! I apologize for this. Jack, give this man a 50 percent raise." Well, I kissed the ring, I got out of the room happy because I'm a stupid man when it comes to arithmetic. I was now getting $45 a week for both jobs. (Laugh) But he could do that grand gesture. "Give him 50 percent raise." It was--you know.

JO: Was there much contact with Federal Theatre? Did you see people?

HT: No. Once they broke—as I say, they felt like you're playing in the 3I League. You don't know what the 3I League is?

JO: Yes.

HT: You do? You're playing Class A ball in the 3I League and you're brought up to the major leagues. You know, no matter how much you want to be a nice guy, you have nothing to do any more with the guys in the 3I League because you're around with the guys in the Big League. You're in the National League, you're in the American League. You know, they're famous, there are responsibilities. You've got to get married, you've got to have a wife and kids out in Teaneck, New Jersey, if you're on the Yankees. That's where

they all live, out there. I mean, it's the whole thing, the image of the Yankees. You can't go back to the 3I League and say, "Hey, how's it going, boys?" You don't have time for that. You've got 162 games a year plus exhibition games plus spring training plus if you're goddamned lucky, the playoffs in the Series. You don't have time to go back. Well, we didn't have time to go back to those poor suckers who didn't make it out of the Federal Theatre. Their feeling was,as I told you, if you had it, you got out.

JO: How about the Group Theatre? You mentioned some kind of collaboration with Theatre Union.

HT: The Group Theatre was in existence at the same time and was considered to be the arch-rival. We looked down upon them, they looked down upon us. We sneered at them, they sneered at us. You know, it wasn't until 15 years later that I began meeting people from the Group Theatre who said, "You know, you people did a wonderful job."

And I said, "Boy, I thought you did marvelous shows, but I didn't dare say so at the time, the rivalry was so great."

JO: Do you think it was a healthy rivalry, the competition, or did it just keep you still separated?

HT: Oh, I just think it was a natural theatrical rivalry that anybody could run into. I don't know that it helped or hindered anyone. They went from their original high purposes into the Broadway theatre as the Broadway theatre, just as the Provincetown Playhouse went from Provincetown on Cape Cod to the little theatre down in Greenwich Village up to the Theatre Guild. And suddenly they had huge offices, a bust of Shaw by a lamp coming--you know, it's all very elegant. When you hit it in the theatre, you hit very

big. The money pours in. I'm talking about producers, playwrights, stars, even featured players. You're out of work, you're out of work, you're out of work. Suddenly you're making it, and you're making it every single week, week in and week out because the theatre isn't like the rest of the world. You don't get a weekly or a monthly check. I've taught at Barnard College and Columbia University for 32 years. I expect that monthly check. In the theatre you can go four years without working, which is why a number of actresses marry wealthy men. Because how are you going to live? That's why a number of actors marry wealthy women. How are you going to live? And suddenly it comes in and with the first two weeks' salary you pay your bills. The third week you say, "Well, I'll splurge on myself. I'll buy me a new necktie and a new cardigan and a new pair of slacks and a new shirt." And you've still got money on your hands. Well, the fourth week you go out and buy three new suits. Well, after that what are you going to do? You know, now it's a new motor car. Now it's a boat. It's like hitting the mother lode. It's true that actors tend to say, "Oh, well, my God, I'm doing the same thing week in and week out. I get bored with it." But you get a good professional Broadway actor and he or she will say, "Boy, let that run start. Just let it run for two or three years. I can take it. I love it." It's the unprofessionals who say, "Well, you know, I want to get out. I want to go to Hollywood and make a movie." Every now and then you run across an actor who is in a hit and wants to improve his station in life. I remember I had a play running on Broadway and a fellow wanted to leave. And he was playing a secondary role and he wanted to play a lead. Well, the play was The Solid Gold Cadillac and it was going to run for a long, long time. He gave his two-week notice, he left, he went into rehearsal with the other play.

It opened, it closed, he was out of work. It was a great shaking of the dice and rolling and seeing how they come up. I know very few people in the theatre, with one or two exceptions, and I can name the two right now who are gamblers, because most of the people in the theatre gamble for stakes far higher than any horse bet or any football bet or any spread on a basketball game. You're gambling a year of your life, two years, three years of your life on a given play, if you're a writer, two years if you're a producer to raise the money, get the cast, the director, the scene designer, take it on the road. You know, it's a tremendous gamble. If I want to gamble, I'll gamble over there and not on the telephone with a bookie. "Hey, get me down on the fifth in Aqueduct."

JO: Was it as much of a gamble in the thirties or more so?

HT: Yes. Yes, it was the same thing. It just cost a hell of a lot less. Like inflation hits shoes, it hit shows. When I came to New York, you could do a one-set comedy, take it on the road for two weeks and bring it in for less than $10,000. Today that costs $100,000 or $150,000. I remember hearing that musicals cost $100,000, what was an unheard of price. But then you've got to remember that at the height of the golden age of the American heatre, the biggest comedy hits went for $3.30 or $2.20 for a drama. A musical went for $3.30. People would come from the Federal Theatre and talk about why we in the Mercury shouldn't return to $1.00 top. Well, that was silly to return to $1.00 top. What the hell? Every other show on Broadway was getting $2.20 or $3.30 and we had our rent on Mercury Theatre—used to be the Comedy Theatre owned by the Shuberts. They weren't going to give it to us for less because we had $1.00 top. They were the Shuberts. They wanted money. They were interested in the theatre, yes, but before

that, they were interested in money. And over and over, people from the Federal Theatre came to argue about a return to the $1.00 top. But wisely, Houseman wouldn't go for it. I mean, he realized the practicality, the economics of the theatre of the late thirties. Now today if you set a $3.30 top, you know, they'd look at you. You're out of your mind. Fiddler sells for $20 a ticket now; $17.50 is not unheard of. I went to a benefit with my wife--the same way I asked to get a raise from Welles and Houseman--the other night. It cost us $95 for two seats to see Side by Side. Granted it's a Phoenix Theatre benefit, but you know, that's a tremendous amount of money. Now we drove down in the car and parked. That's another $6.00. So I'm over $100 and I'm not counting the meal at Sardi's which was $30 some. So I'm $135 and we don't have babysitters. Our daughter is grown up. It's an enormous price. The theatre today is an expensive item, but then shoes are expensive and steaks are expensive and cigarettes are expensive. And the maintenance on this apartment is expensive, and the garage. I pay more for my garage now than I used to pay for the apartments my wife lived in when we got married. So, you know, when you say the ticket costs have gone up, it's true they have.

I went to the corner last year. A new ice cream place opened. I said, "I'll have a chocolate ice cream cone, please." They gave me a large chocolate ice cream cone.

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JO: --the styles of making a play. Was there a style of rehearsal, direction, acting in the Mercury Theatre that was a--

HT: The style was Orson's style. When he felt like rehearsing, we rehearsed. When he felt like sleeping, we didn't rehearse. If he felt like rehearsing

from 11:00 at night to 6:00 in the morning, damn the stagehands' overtime, full speed ahead. He was a brilliant, inventive, imaginative, talented director. He was a better director than he was an actor. He did have—he doesn't have it now, unfortunately. I mean, you can only consume so many bottles of brandy a day before it begins to affect your vocal cords and your voice box, but he had the greatest voice I've ever heard in my life. But next to that, his direction was just magnificent. He was in a class all by himself.

JO: How would he go about it? How would he direct?

HT: He would sit generally at a table in the center aisle behind the table, sit on a chair behind a table, and he would have a microphone on the table. And he would whisper his directions into the microphone. That table also served as his dining table. When he was hungry, he would send people out and they would bring in the steaks and the French fries and the ice cream and pots of coffee a foot and a half high, which he would consume with great relish. And when he was tired, he would say, "All right, children." Now mind you, you know, he was younger than most of the people but we were his children. He wasn't younger than I was but there were character men and leading ladies and things like that,who were older than he was. But everybody was his "children" all the time. He was a marvelous director. His concepts went haywire every now and then. As in Danton's Death, as I say, we had no stage and I worked the show from the basement on a little board with buttons on it. I would turn the light on, that's a warning. When I turned it off, that was the cue for the actors, the stagehands, the lighting or whatever it was. And he had this all surrounded by a cyclorama on which he wanted the people of Paris to be looking down upon the carryings-on. The

people of Paris were the--consisted of having a group of Hallowe'en masks, unpainted Hallowe'en masks, white, glued onto the cyclorama. This meant they had to lower the cyke, take these hundreds of masks, bend them a quarter of an inch around, and then glue them on, and then spray them with sort of a purplish paint. And I kept saying, "It's going to look like a lot of pebbles, Orson."

"No, we'll light it properly.

Well, I was wrong. It didn't look like pebbles. It just looked like a purple cyke. They didn't see it at all. But when he was wrong, he was wrong. But when he was right, he was very, very right, and most of the time he was right. He had a theory about beginning a play. He said, "When you ring up the curtain, always have it very dark so that the actors can barely be seen and so that the members of the audience, instead of sitting complacently back in their chairs, would have to lean forward and fix their attention very markedly upon the stage. And once you had their attention, then you could slowly bring up the lights and you would have that audience for the play. And that was quite an ingenious way of beginning a play. I still think it's a good way of beginning a play. It's Orson's idea and he was an excellent director.

JO: And how would the others, Joseph Cotten or—

HT: They would take directions from him like a baby takes milk from its mother. He had that instinct, that touch, and they trusted him for it. And he was right many more times than he was wrong, unlike the Group where they sort of gathered round and talked it over and the whole soul and, you know, what does this mean. It says, "I'm going to the bathroom," but what does it really mean "I'm going to the bathroom?" Oh! There would be great angst, in

the pure word that Freud used the word "angst." There would be much, "Oh, boy!" suffering of things. They worked it that way. Welles worked it his way. Both were successful.

JO: Did the Federal Theatre have an audience that it was playing to or looking for?

HT: I think they were just trying to get any audience they could, any audience that would come and see it. You know, we don't say at this point in the theatre, "We want only this kind of an audience." Just pack those houses. That's all you want. That's all Shakespeare wanted. You know, Shakespeare had a theatre he owned/called the Globe or he rented called the Globe Theatre. Across the street from him they were displaying some Barbary apes one day and business fell off drastically. So he said, "Oh, if it's monsters they want, monsters I'll give them." And he wrote a play called The Tempest filled with monsters, very successful in its day.

It boiled down to one word: "acceptance," and the counterpoint of that is "rejection." No actor likes to walk out onto a stage and see a sea of empty seats. That depresses the hell out of them. I remember one of our foremost actors appeared in a musical by one of our foremost composers. The composer was also the producer and he wouldn't-two for the house. And the actor called me up and said, "You're a friend of his. See what you can do with him. Come and talk to me."

I went and I talked to him and he said, "Usherettes, that's who I'm playing to. Usherettes, that's all that's out there." He was terribly upset. Eventually they got onto twofers and they limped along better. But seeing those faces there makes the actor feel accepted. That's the important thing. And in our own way, all of us are trying to gain acceptance and fight off

rejection.

JO: How about the critics? You mentioned before Brooks Atkinson saying that the honeymoon was over.

HT: Well, I think the critics were very kind to the Federal Theatre and kind to the Group and kind to the Mercury in the early days because they encouraged young people, like they were kind of off-Broadway today. They will put up with a lot more garbage off Broadway than they will on Broadway. They will cut your heart out if they think it's old and tacky on Broadway. But off Broadway it can be new and experimental, different, you know. I think the critics leaned over backwards for Federal Theatre. Yes, I do,and its two offspring, the Group and the Mercury. But then, you know, they should. They should encourage new organizations, new vehicles. Joe Papp,when he started, mothered them practically. What else can I tell you?

JO: That's what I have. Is there anything else you want to say?

HT: That's it.

(End of interview)