

II. OFF-BROADWAY

Professional theater productions in New York City performed in other than Broadway houses became known as "Off-Broadway Theater" about 15 years ago when Actors' Equity Association formally defined an off-Broadway house as one which seats no more than 300 persons. By 1966 there were 35 off-Broadway houses, production costs had soared from \$8,000 to \$25,000, ticket prices remained stable, and the number of productions declined from an estimated high of 120 in 1962 to 50 in the 1965-66 season.

The following information was obtained from the League of Off-Broadway Producers, the New York City Department of Commerce and Industrial Development, and "The American Theatre—Today and Tomorrow" by Norris Houghton, a background paper for the Rockefeller Brothers Fund Panel on the performing arts:

Number of theaters.—There are currently 35 off-Broadway theaters in New York City.

Seating capacity.—Off-Broadway theaters seat from 131 to 300 persons. Their average seating capacity is 200.

Construction and financing.—All off-Broadway theaters were built with private capital. Investments ranged from \$10,000 to \$50,000 and most involved the conversion of old ballrooms, movie theaters, and banquet rooms.

There were 24 off-Broadway theaters between 1956 and 1960; 29 in 1961 and 1962; 30 in 1963; a record high of 37 in 1964; 36 in 1965; and 35 in 1966.

Production costs.—In the early and middle 1950's an off-Broadway production could be mounted for \$8,000.⁴ Within 5 years the required capital expenditure had risen to \$15,000 and as much as \$25,000 is needed now to mount a current off-Broadway production.⁵

Number of productions per year.—There were 59 off-Broadway productions in 1958 and 1959, 85 in 1960 and 95 in 1961.⁶ Approximately 120 productions were mounted in 1962. There has been a steady decline in the number of productions since 1962 and it has been estimated that only 50 productions were mounted in the 1965-66 season.⁷

Ticket prices.—Ticket prices for the 1965-66 season range from \$2.25 to \$5.50, not appreciably higher since the off-Broadway movement began.⁸

III. NATIONAL TOUR THEATERS

Professional theater tours booked out of New York are currently grossing more money, playing fewer weeks and have fewer theaters available to them. The number of theaters available for professional touring productions fell from 560 in 1921 to 193 in 1960.⁹ The total number of playing weeks has decreased from 1,152 in the 1948-49 season to 699 in the 1965-66 season while gross receipts have risen from \$23 million to \$32 million over the same 18-year period.¹⁰

⁴ League of Off-Broadway Producers.

⁵ Rockefeller Brothers Fund Panel Study *op. cit.*

⁶ New York City Department of Commerce and Industrial Development.

⁷ League of Off-Broadway Producers.

⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹ John F. Wharton *op. cit.*

¹⁰ Variety.