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Letters, Lectures, Memos, and Minutes: An Archival Study of George Pierce Baker's Role in the History of Theater and Performance Studies

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LETTERS, LECTURES, MEMOS, AND MINUTES:
AN ARCHIVAL STUDY OF GEORGE PIERCE BAKER'S ROLE IN THE HISTORY OF
THEATER AND PERFORMANCE STUDIES

A Dissertation

Submitted to the School of Graduate Studies and Research

In Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements for the Degree
Doctor of Philosophy

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Indiana University of Pennsylvania
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George Pierce Baker is an important figure in the history of the theatre studies. However, before being claimed by the historians of dramatic theatre, he was a Professor of Rhetoric at Harvard University. By returning to the archives of Radcliffe, Harvard, and Yale, this study first examines Baker's career as a rhetoric professor at Harvard as well as his tumultuous relationship with the Harvard Corporation, an entity which did not support his interests in dramatic writing. Second, this study looks to the archives to understand Baker's move to Yale University, a move which allowed for dramatic writing to be placed at the center of the curriculum, rather than on the periphery, where it had existed at Harvard.

The correspondence of George Pierce Baker provides rich insight into a burgeoning discipline of study at Yale in the Dramatic Arts. Although he began his career as a professor of rhetoric, Baker abandoned that field to invest himself fully into the teaching of dramatic writing. The pedagogy he employed in the two fields did not overlap, nor is their evidence in Baker's writings or correspondence that would suggest a desire to bridge the two. Rather, the archival texts discussed in this dissertation speak to the events which led up to and followed the growth of a department of dramatic studies at Yale. Although the lectures, letters, memos, and minutes discussed in this archival study illustrate the development of a discipline of

study in the early twentieth century, the history of George Pierce Baker and his place within the annals the dramatic arts could inform the current historical scholarship of performance studies scholars.