Voices from Within:
Grotowski's Polish Collaborators

Voices from Within: Grotowski's Polish Collaborators

EDITED BY PAUL ALLAIN AND GRZEGORZ ZIÓŁKOWSKI

PolishTheatrePerspectives

First published 2015
by Polish Theatre Perspectives.

Polish Theatre Perspectives is an imprint of TAPAC: Theatre and Performance Across Cultures
86-90 Paul Street, London, EC2A 4NE, UK.

Co-published in partnership with
the Grotowski Institute, Wrocław, Poland.

To purchase your copy of this or any other Polish Theatre Perspectives title
please visit www.ptp.press.

ISBN: 978-1-910203-02-6 (paperback)
ISBN: 978-1-910203-00-2 (online)

Designed and typeset by Barbara Kaczmarek, Wrocław, Poland.

This book has received support from the following organisations:

Contents

Series Editors' Preface

One of the most significant obstacles faced by those with an interest in Poland's vibrant theatre and performance culture, but who are unfamiliar with its source languages, has often been limited access to the many core materials that have remained untranslated, unarchived, or unpublished outside Poland. This applies even in the case of materials about practitioners whose work and methods have been influential around the world, such as Jerzy Grotowski and the Teatr Laboratorium (Laboratory Theatre).

We are therefore pleased to launch, alongside the *Polish Theatre Perspectives* online resource (www.ptp.press), a companion series of PTP books and films that will provide international readers with unprecedented access to developments across Polish theatre, drama, and performance. Covering essential and emerging topics in the field, the series gathers a range of primary and scholarly content, from edited collections and research monographs to extended interviews, practitioner notes, documentaries, and mixed-mode accounts of performances and working processes. Each title seeks to make a focused intervention, opening up new viewpoints and potential areas of dialogue among Polish and international theatre communities.

As with this inaugural edition, the books and films are developed by subject specialists who select, edit, introduce, and, where appropriate, cooperate in translating the materials, setting them in their wider cultural context. While primary sources are often very different in nature and register from academic research writing, and thus do not undergo the same kind of peer evaluation as the scholarly texts, we nonetheless engage independent reviewers to assist in preparing all PTP content, with specific emphasis on cultural translation and accessibility for an international audience.

Contributions to the series are specially commissioned or otherwise appear in translation for the first time. In the case of *Voices from Within: Grotowski's Polish Collaborators*, this collection marks the first occasion that the history and aftermath of the Teatr Laboratorium – one of the most widely acclaimed ensembles of twentieth-century theatre – has been told in English through the distinctive voices of a broad selection of Grotowski's Polish colleagues and long-time co-creators. It thus provides a rare insight, offering readers the chance to encounter individual perspectives on training and the creative process; group dynamics and ethics; making work in difficult social and political conditions; the Laboratorium's evolution, dissolution, and diaspora; and the final stages of Grotowski's research, following his emigration from Poland.

As Allain and Ziółkowski indicate in their Introduction, it is hoped that this multivocal history – as recalled throughout *Voices from Within* by the Laboratorium's

administrators, designers, 'devil's advocates', performers, work leaders, and those later mentored by Grotowski – will go some way towards diversifying the study of the company's practice and demythologising the creative methods and research outcomes that, as Grotowski himself commented in his programme notes to the Laboratorium's US tour (see p. 16, below), are often mistakenly associated with 'his name and his name alone'. Through these narratives and reflections, we see some of the collective and individual uncertainties, discoveries, and pathfinding that accompanied what was conceived among the group as a genuinely collaborative research. We also hope that the volume will contribute to a broader trend that sees the growing internationalisation and global visibility of local perspectives on the various stages of Grotowski's activity, many of which have remained relatively separate and indeed monolingual up to now.

Across the series, PTP will continue to publish work that seeks to bridge performance cultures and offers an invaluable resource for those wishing to engage with Polish theatre through diverse source materials, contexts, and media. Ongoing information, including details of current and future titles, can be found at www.ptp.press.

DUNCAN JAMIESON AND ADELA KARSZNIA

Introduction: Voices from Within

PAUL ALLAIN AND GRZEGORZ ZIÓŁKOWSKI

Dedicated to all our collaborators, past and present

Theatre can never be a solitary process. Yet so often what comes down to us as a history of the theatre, however recent this history may be, is singular, the vision of one person, usually a man, most often a director. This also applies to the work of the Polish theatre director Jerzy Grotowski. Celebration of his achievements often overshadows the work of his many collaborators. This isolation is only entrenched further by the fact that much of this history has not made the leap from Polish into English-language publication. For non-Polish-speakers, materials that place his work in a broader nexus – personal and work-based as much as contextual – have simply not been readily available. This is something that is changing, a shift of which the present volume is a vital part.[1]

In this *Polish Theatre Perspectives* collection, we hope to address this misalignment by presenting the voices of Polish collaborators of Grotowski from different phases of his work; to use the taxonomy he left us in *The Grotowski Sourcebook* (1997), these range from 'Theatre of Productions' to 'Art as vehicle'. Some contributions are located in one phase alone: for example, Andrzej Bielski's in Theatre of Productions or Przemysław Wasilkowski's in Art as vehicle, though in both cases we also learn the story of what they did before they met Grotowski, and afterwards. Other texts, such as those of Ludwik Flaszen and Rena Mirecka, range across the twenty-five-year period of activity of the Teatr Laboratorium (Laboratory Theatre, 1959-1984). With the exception of Teo Spychalski's interview, prepared especially for this edition, all these texts have been published in some form in Polish, and, as far as we know, none have previously been available outside Polish-language circles.[2] Until now, such views have only been presented partially, for example in excerpts of interviews and talks cited briefly in Jennifer Kumiega's *The Theatre of Grotowski* (1985). These voices have never been heard before in such a systematic way.[3]

---

[1] Ziółkowski, as programme director of the Grotowski Centre and then the Grotowski Institute (2004-2009), and Allain, as part of his Arts and Humanities Research Council-funded British Grotowski project (2006-2009), have made sustained attempts to address this situation. See items 78-82 and 85 in the 'Selected Bibliography of Sources in English', at the end of the book.

[2] A Polish publication which has a particular relevance to this book is a selection of Tadeusz Burzyński's articles on Grotowski's and his collaborators' work, *Mój Grotowski* (My Grotowski), ed. by Janusz Degler and Grzegorz Ziółkowski (Wrocław: Grotowski Centre, 2006). Burzyński was a journalist who followed Grotowski's work closely and wrote regularly about it over many years. His special position is confirmed by the fact that he was the only journalist invited to the first presentation of *Apocalypsis cum Figuris* in 1968, half a year before the official premiere. Several of the interviews translated here were conducted by him.

[3] The bibliography at the end of this edition includes already available English texts and interviews by Grotowski's Polish collaborators.

From the left: Ludwik Flaszen, Mieczysław Janowski, Antoni Jahołkowski, Rena Mirecka, Jerzy Grotowski, Ryszard Cieślak, Maja Komorowska, and Stanisław Scierski in Amsterdam (1966).
Photograph: Maria Austria, courtesy of the Maria Austria Instituut.

In focusing on Polish collaborators, we have no desire to deny or undermine the importance of others' contributions.[4] However, in reality, many non-Poles have had a better chance of getting their voices heard internationally. Of other crucial, long-term collaborators such as Jairo Cuesta, James Slowiak, Maud Robart, Thomas Richards, and Mario Biagini, only Robart's voice is almost unheard in English (whereas in Italian a whole special issue of *Biblioteca Teatrale* was devoted to her work).[5] This situation was partly addressed by the 2009 UNESCO-designated 'Year of Grotowski' programme, *Tracing Grotowski's Path: Year of Grotowski in New York*, which hosted a meeting with Robart on 19 February 2009.[6] But published texts clearly have a different impact, status, and longevity than such meetings. There is still more work to be done to enable the full range of Grotowski's partners to become audible.

While we have tried to provide a historical sweep in this collection with a range of timbres, we have inevitably been constrained both by the distance of time and by

[4] For two recent Polish/international collaborations, see the documentaries: *Grotowski in Bengal* (2009) directed by Elżbieta Dziuk and Krzysztof Renik, and including conversations with Grotowski's collaborators from India, such as Abani Biswas and Ramakrishna Dhar; and *Amecameca* (2011), directed by Małgorzata Szyszka, which includes interviews with Grotowski's Mexican collaborators such as Nicolás Núñez, Jaime Soriano Palma, and Helena Guardia Sánchez.

[5] See *Biblioteca Teatrale*, 77 (2006). The Haitian Robart was particularly active in Theatre of Sources, Objective Drama, and subsequently Art as vehicle, as discussed in Spychalski's interview.

[6] This was organised by the Polish Cultural Institute in New York and the Performance Studies Department, Tisch School of the Arts, New York University, and was curated by Richard Schechner.

what is materially available. There is little information on or analysis of Theatre of Sources except in Spychalski's piece which ends this book, and Objective Drama is not even mentioned, as no Poles (with the exception of Magda Złotowska who was involved in the initial stage) took part in this phase, which happened in the United States from 1983 to 1986. Even in Polish, the voices of many of Grotowski's collaborators have scarcely been heard. Flaszen, as the official spokesperson of the theatre and one who influenced the reception of the performances through published programmes and what might almost be considered manifestos, is the main exception to this. Apart from the material gathered in this volume, there are just a handful of interviews and texts from the time of the Laboratorium's activity, these mainly by Ryszard Cieślak and Zbigniew Cynkutis.[7] This may be interpreted as arising from a 'rule of silence' that held sway in this special order of theatre craftsmen. Or it may simply be that they had little inclination or time to speak.

We use the term 'craftsmen' here with some hesitation, for it should be noted that of the sixteen texts here, four are by women. Although this is still a small proportion, it is an accurate representation of the gender balance of Grotowski's Polish collaborators, the majority of whom were men. Importantly, this volume also gives voice to other perspectives on a theatre company's daily life outside the rehearsal and performance studio, such as the often invisible administrative support and expertise without which such organisations would grind to a halt. Much of this is frequently done by women, which may be one reason for its relative marginalisation. In Stefania Gardecka's interview with Ziółkowski, updated for this book and thus placed as the penultimate piece, we see clearly how Grotowski's demands for absolute professionalism affected all aspects of the group's activity. The interview with Maja Komorowska, now one of Poland's leading theatre, film, and television actors, reveals just how hard it is to balance family life with such intensity of hours and frankly unsocial and varied commitments as work with Grotowski necessitated. We need to remember this, as theatre histories can all too easily erase such apparently minor considerations to focus on the bigger picture: innovations in staging or acting technique. We well know how much Grotowski achieved on this front, but need also to be reminded at what personal cost such revolutions can occur. Interestingly, however,

---

[7] See: 'Aktor – marzenia, myśli, rozterki' (Actor: Dreams, Thoughts, Dilemmas), Leonia Jabłonkówna talks to Ryszard Cieślak, *Teatr*, 14 (1971), 4-7; Zbigniew Cynkutis, 'Ku znalezieniu…' (Towards Finding…), *Dialog*, 12 (1973), 132-35; Zbigniew Cynkutis, 'To ludzkie miejsce – teatr' (This Human Place – Theatre), in *Sztuka otwarta: wspólnota – kreacja – teatr* (Open Art: Community – Creation – Theatre) (Wrocław: Biuro Wydawnictwo Akademickiego Ośrodka Teatralnego 'Kalambur', 1977), pp. 156-65, reprinted in: *Świadomość teatru: Polska myśl teatralna drugiej połowy XX wieku* (Awareness of the Theatre: Polish Thinking about Theatre in the Second Half of the Twentieth Century), ed. by Wojciech Dudzik (Warsaw: PWN, 2007), pp. 181-91; Zbigniew Cynkutis, '*Drzewo Ludzi* i Teatr Źródeł. O programie i zamierzeniach Teatru Laboratorium' (*Tree of People* and Theatre of Sources: On the Laboratory Theatre's Programme and Plans), *Odra*, 11 (1978), 83-86 ; Jerzy Gurawski, 'Grotowski miał sześć palców' (Grotowski Had Six Fingers), *Notatnik Teatralny*, 4 (1992), 51-57; 'Spotkanie zespołu Anatolija Wasiliewa z Zygmuntem Molikiem' (An Encounter of Anatoli Vassiliev's Company with Zygmunt Molik), ed. by Zygmunt Molik and Zbigniew Osiński, *Notatnik Teatralny*, 4 (1992), 58-69; 'Tyle metod ilu ludzi' (As Many Methods as People), Andrzej Kietliński talks to Ryszard Cieślak, *Notatnik Teatralny*, 4 (1992), 70-79. Inevitably, more voices could be heard after Grotowski's death on 14 January 1999. Many are gathered in the extensive and insightful collection *Grotowski – narracje* (Grotowski: Narratives), ed. by Agata Chałupnik and others, intro. by Leszek Kolankiewicz (Warsaw and Wrocław: University of Warsaw and The Grotowski Institute, 2013).

Jerzy Grotowski and Ryszard Cieślak during rehearsals for *The Constant Prince* (1965).
Photograph: Marek Czudowski, CAF/PAP.

regret is rarely expressed in these texts; the collaborators view their personal sacrifices outside the workplace in an almost exclusively positive light.

In spite of the many demands Grotowski made on all these collaborators, in reading these texts we come to appreciate the love and respect they felt for him – feelings that, as it appears here, were invariably held mutually. Perhaps this is because Grotowski asked as much, if not more, of himself. This collection gives us both an intimate and a panoptic vision of Grotowski and his work. While we may already know or understand that the director's task is one of synthesis and coordination, contributions here – from an 'architect of spaces' (Gurawski), a literary director (Flaszen), an early co-director (Krygier, who also subsequently became a poster and costume designer with the company), cultural *animateurs* (Spychalski and Zmysłowski), an administrator (Gardecka), as well as the core of the acting ensemble – reinforce how much a laboratory director/researcher like Grotowski needs to be a multi-limbed Kali. Through the collaborators, inevitably we learn about the 'egregor' himself.

We hope also that this collection can help to redress the narrowness of the conception of Grotowski's 'living tradition' presented in the *TDR* special issue 'Re-Reading Grotowski' (summer 2008).[8] While it is clear that Grotowski considered the essence of his work to have passed to Thomas Richards – in an act of 'transmission', as they themselves have described this process – the framework of much of the *TDR* issue all but ignores the fact that many collaborators of Grotowski from earlier periods of his life are also part of a living tradition, even if this grows out of different kinds of collaboration than the more specific and singular transmission.[9] Figures such as Cieślak, Cynkutis, Mirecka, and Molik were creative partners and often long-time work leaders in the Laboratorium, whose contributions to the ethos and development of the company's actor training and performance process Grotowski continued to highlight in his public lectures throughout the 1980s and 1990s.[10] Each of

[8] See *Re-Reading Grotowski*, ed. by Kris Salata and Lisa Wolford Wylam (= *TDR: The Drama Review,* 52.2 (2008)).

[9] See Lisa Wolford Wylam, 'Living Tradition: Continuity of Research at the Workcenter of Jerzy Grotowski and Thomas Richards', in *Re-Reading Grotowski*, 126-49. However, it is worth noting that one of Grotowski's own contributions in this issue of *TDR* ('On the Genesis of *Apocalypsis*', trans. by Kris Salata, 40-51), highlights the collaborative partnership at the heart of the Laboratorium research and of the creative process that led to the seminal production of *Apocalypsis cum Figuris*.

[10] For Grotowski's discussions of the actor's contributions, see, among others, Grotowski, *Tecniche originarie dell'attore* (The Actor's Originary Techniques), an unpublished partial transcription of Grotowski's lectures at the University of Rome 1982, ed. by Luisa Tinti (Rome: Università degli Studi di Roma 'La Sapienza', 1987);

these collaborators continued their own lines of research and teaching following the Theatre of Productions. In Lisa Wolford Wylam's *TDR* article, the long-term members of the Teatr Laboratorium are mentioned in passing, in one or two lines only. Paratheatrical collaborators are dismissed as 'enthusiasts', their work equated with 'efforts by students, amateurs'.[11] When we re-read Grotowski through the present collection, and learn how both Spychalski and Zmysłowski were being considered as continuators, and given increasing responsibility for the work – a process that was partly confounded by the difficult social and political circumstances in Poland at the beginning of the 1980s – we see how limited this perspective is. Singular transmission is clearly significant, a process made evident by Grotowski in the renaming of the Workcenter of Jerzy Grotowski to the Workcenter of Jerzy Grotowski and Thomas Richards in 1996. But the broader collaborative elements of Grotowski's whole trajectory should also be recognised. Poles have certainly had enough historicising from monocular perspectives. And Poland's history has never been an easy one. We hope the breadth of this edition is welcomed within Grotowski's country of birth as much as it is outside it.

This edition thus creates an alternative narrative and broadens the picture, joining a host of recent materials about and, to a lesser extent, by Grotowski, several of which were mentioned earlier. It is a shame that it has taken this long and the spur of the Year of Grotowski and its aftermath to bring this particular collection to fruition, but at least it is now in good company. While we cannot prevent ongoing mythologising of Grotowski, we might help reduce it.[12] Mythologising can only begin to be undone through making materials available, such as the perspectives collated here. These can become the 'files' that Flaszen speaks of for academics and practitioners to pore over, though his reference also reminds us of the files that were, under communism, kept on countless Polish citizens, and inevitably on Laboratorium members too. Many of the texts here have the nature of being very personal testimonies, but are no less valid for that. Where Grotowski was so cautious with words in publications and statements about his practice, here we reveal his other sides, playful or flippant, and when daily necessity demanded more normalised contingencies. We also learn how people came to Grotowski or were chosen by him, what happened after he left Poland in 1982, and when the Teatr Laboratorium officially disbanded two years later in 1984 (in fact

Gabriele Vacis, A*wareness: Dieci giorni con Jerzy Grotowski* (Awareness: Ten Days with Jerzy Grotowski) (Milan: Holden, 2002); and Grotowski, *La 'Lignée Organique' au Théâtre et dans le Rituel* (The 'Organic Line' in Theatre and in Ritual) (Paris: Le Livre qui Parle, 2008; cassette tapes or mp3 audiobook). On the continuing research of certain of the Laboratorium actors, see for example, *Podróż. Rena Mirecka – aktorka Teatru Laboratorium* (Journey: Rena Mirecka, Laboratory Theatre Actress), ed. by Zbigniew Jędrychowski, Zbigniew Osiński, and Grzegorz Ziółkowski (Wrocław: Grotowski Centre, 2005), and its subsequent Italian edition *La sacra canoa. Rena Mirecka dal Teatro Laboratorio di Jerzy Grotowski al Parateatro* (The Sacred Canoe: Rena Mirecka, from Jerzy Grotowski's Laboratory Theatre to Paratheatre), prepared by the original Polish editors along with Pier Pietro Brunelli and Luisa Tinti, and trans. by Marina Fabbri (Rome: Bulzoni, 2010); and Giuliano Campo and Zygmunt Molik, *Zygmunt Molik's Voice and Body Work. The Legacy of Jerzy Grotowski* (London and New York: Routledge, 2010).

[11] Wolford Wylam, 'Living Tradition', p. 128.

[12] This issue is highlighted by Seth Baumrin in an article in *New Theatre Quarterly*. However, Baumrin's article overlooks initiatives, events, and publications that might begin to help us out of the trap of ongoing mythologising. See 'Where is my Grotowski? The Masquerade Plays on', *New Theatre Quarterly*, 25.4 (November 2009), 360-62.

Top: Brzezinka (2008).
Photograph: Grzegorz Ziółkowski.

Below: Ostrowina (2009).
Photograph: Maciej Zakrzewski.

the company ceased working as a group in 1982). We hear stories. In translation we have tried to keep the informality of the conversations, while also ensuring precision about professional, theatrical, and specifically 'Grotowskian' terms.

The order of the texts is mostly chronological, not in terms of when the text was prepared or the interview made, but in relation to the subject matter under discussion. This is with the exception of the last two interviews, which have been reworked or specially conducted for this volume (Gardecka and Spychalski, respectively). Thus the first text by a collaborator is an interview with Flaszen, the co-leader of what was the Teatr 13 Rzędów and what later became the Teatr Laboratorium.[13] As he himself describes it, this is material from the beginning, from 'Genesis'. The collection then progresses from Opole to Wrocław, before moving to the countryside outside that city to focus on Brzezinka and Ostrowina, where rural and forest spaces and buildings became key 'collaborators' in enabling a range of post-theatrical activities.[14] It then stops briefly in Pontedera, with a recollection by Wasilkowski, a Polish performer who worked with Grotowski during the phase of Art as vehicle.[15] This piece has been specially elaborated for this volume from the original Polish publication, to give

[13] At first, the theatre operated under the name Teatr 13 Rzędów (Theatre of the 13 Rows) given by its founders: the couple Stanisława Łopuszańska-Ławska and Eugeniusz Ławski, actors from the Państwowy Teatr Ziemi Opolskiej (State Theatre of the Opole Region). The theatre opened officially on 16 May 1958 with *Freuda teoria snów* (Freud's Dream Theory) by Antoni Cwojdziński. Soon after, Łopuszańska invited Grotowski to direct Jerzy Krzysztoń's play *Pechowcy* (The Ill-Fated). The performance premiered on 8 November 1958. Then the finance department of Miejska Rada Narodowa (the municipal authorities) in Opole accused the founders of running a private enterprise and taxed their activities accordingly, which forced them from Opole to Katowice in 1959. After a gap of four months, it was announced that Jerzy Grotowski and Ludwik Flaszen were to take over the theatre. On 1 September 1959, the Theatre of the 13 Rows began its new season under Grotowski-Flaszen's directorship. On 1 March 1962 the word 'Laboratory' was added to its title and the theatre functioned as the Teatr Laboratorium 13 Rzędów (Laboratory Theatre of the 13 Rows), until the group moved from Opole to Wrocław in January 1965, when 'Instytut Badań Metody Aktorskiej' (Institute for Studies of the Acting Method) was added. At the beginning of 1967, '13 Rows' was dropped from the title. In 1970, the title was abbreviated to Instytut Aktora – Teatr Laboratorium (Actor's Institute – Laboratory Theatre). In the mid-1970s, there were plans to abbreviate it further, to Instytut Laboratorium (Institute Laboratory), but these were never formalised. We have used the Polish terms Teatr Laboratorium for the Laboratory Theatre and Teatr 13 Rzędów for the Theatre of the 13 Rows, except in certain articles or book titles, or other instances where another variant is already well-established.

[14] Brzezinka is the name of the farm buildings located in the forest, near the village of Brzezinka (approximately forty kilometres northeast of Wrocław). The Teatr Laboratorium bought the farm from the Jezierski family in November 1971, renovated it, and created working spaces and modest accommodation facilities there. At first, Brzezinka hosted activities from paratheatre and then from Theatre of Sources (until the declaration of Martial Law in Poland on 13 December 1981). Since its renovation in 2002, it has been a site for practical activities of the Grotowski Centre and then the Grotowski Institute. Ostrowina is the name of the foresters' lodge with farm buildings, located at the edge of the forest, near the village of Ostrowina, approximately four kilometres from Brzezinka. It was a space for Teo Spychalski's work and later for the second seminar of Theatre of Sources led by Grotowski from 1 July to 10 August 1982. It is currently a ruin.

[15] We approached another collaborator from this phase, Piotr Borowski, but he felt his work had moved on to such an extent that he did not want to be included within the framework presented here. More can be read on Borowski and his work in Pontedera in Allain's chapter 'Piotr Borowski and Poland's Studium Teatralne: where process becomes performance' in *Contemporary European Theatre Directors*, ed. by Maria Delgado and Dan Rebellato (London and New York: Routledge, 2010), pp. 165-84.

more insight into Grotowski's continuing connections with Poland and Polish artists after his emigration.

The whole collection is prefaced by a reproduction of Grotowski's brief text prepared for the Laboratorium's foreign tours. It was distributed to the public at open events such as the performances during the company's 1969 visit to New York, in order to stress the collaborative nature of the ensemble's work and to redress what Grotowski saw as an imbalance in how the authorship of the Laboratorium's work was perceived. In between the pieces here and sometimes within them, we learn something of the collaborators' personal histories, most movingly in relation to the premature deaths of Jahołkowski (1 September 1981), Zmysłowski (4 February 1982), Scierski (11 July 1983), Cynkutis (9 January 1987), and Cieślak (15 June 1990). The difficult years of the early 1980s for the group, for an ailing Grotowski, and for an embattled country (Martial Law was declared on 13 December 1981) haunt several of the pieces, as the interviewees share their sense of loss, grief, and exile. The closeness of the group inevitably fuelled much mourning when life's vicissitudes took over.

We are reminded in Gardecka's interview that Grotowski, referring to Jean d'Ormesson's *The Glory of the Empire*, suggested that his collaborators 'Just tell the world what we were and what we did'. Grotowski only hinted at this indirectly, one of his many coded and cryptic games, not giving them anything as easy as the specific page references. Of course, 'what they were' should become apparent as you read the interviews and statements, albeit only as a snapshot of those specific times; 'what they did' was very difficult to describe, especially in the depths of exploration of a collaborator like Cieślak or in the searching and the vagaries of paratheatre. Nevertheless, much more directly, in our own Anglo-Polish collaboration, this 'telling' is what we have tried to enable here. Here speak the 'voices from within'.

Editorial Notes

We have included information about first publication or when an interview was held before each contribution, in order to orientate the reader better.

We occasionally follow the original Polish texts where some authors or editors have chosen to use capital letters (for example Flaszen, Cynkutis, and Mirecka). Their purpose in doing so is not always evident but this technique may have been employed for emphasis.

Where footnotes are unascribed, these are from the authors or by the editors of the original Polish texts. The abbreviation 'Eds.' used in the footnotes refers to the editors of the present volume.

As well as brief biographies placed before the texts, we also include a selected bibliography of sources in English. This focuses as much as possible on those materials that are more widely available as well as those we consider the most important, including other publications pertaining to Grotowski's collaborators. This list is presented chronologically, and although it is by no means comprehensive, it should be a useful starting point for further research.

All translations have been worked up in close consultation and collaboration with the editors, often through several iterations. All cuts in the materials are marked with '[…]' and were introduced by the editors of the original Polish texts, unless indicated otherwise in the footnotes.

Acknowledgements

The editors and publishers wish to thank all the contributors to this volume: we are very grateful both to the authors and speakers for their words and to Krzysztof Bednarski, Urszula Bielska, Michał Burzyński, Agnieszka Cieślak, Maria Cynkutis, Anna Fryer, Francesco Galli, Fredi Graedel, Jerzy Gurawski, Szymon Jahołkowski, Maria Krygier, Mateusz and Joachim Krygier, Janusz Majewski, Hanna Masełko, Ewa Oleszko-Molik, Andrzej Paluchiewicz, Jan Sobolewski, Beata Tallar, and Agnieszka Wójtowicz for their permission to publish texts, photographs, posters, and illustrations without charge. Unless otherwise indicated in the captions, all images have been reproduced courtesy of the Grotowski Institute Archives. We also thank the editorial boards of *Dialog*, *Didaskalia*, *Notatnik Teatralny*, Oficyna Wydawnicza Errata, and *Pamiętnik Teatralny* for permission to reprint material originally published in Polish.

The Arts and Humanities Research Council, the Adam Mickiewicz Institute, the Polish Ministry of Culture and National Heritage, and the University of Kent provided vital material input, paying for research and translation costs and giving other means of assistance. The Adam Mickiewicz Institute's help was under the auspices of Polska! Year, a celebration of Polish culture in the UK. We greatly appreciate the support of each of these institutional partners.

We would like to express special gratitude to peer reviewers Murray Edmond and Jim Slowiak, and to Teo Spychalski, for excellent feedback and advice and their customary precise attention to detail.

I am anxious to dispel a certain misunderstanding which is liable to arise from the tendency in discussion and analysis of the Theatre Laboratory to feature my name and my name alone. Without in any way wishing to give an impression of mock modesty, I must stress that in the end I am not **the author** of our productions, or at any rate not the only one. I am not somebody who has devised the whole show by himself, set up all the roles in advance, planned the decor, arranged the lighting and designed the costumes. „Grotowski" is not a one-man band. Or a Proteus. I do not want my name to hide the truth about the creative endeavour that has gone into a performance or to hog all the credit for its results.

My name is, in fact, only there as a symbol of a group and its work in which are fused all the efforts of my associates. And these efforts are not a matter of collaboration pure and simple: **they amount to creation.**

In our productions next to nothing is dictated by the director. His role in the preparatory stages is to stimulate the creative associations for which the impulse comes from the actors and to organize the final structure in which they assume a specific shape. It is one of the basic principles of our method of creation to have this kind of interplay in which director and actors give as much as they take, ceaselessly exchanging, sometimes passively, sometimes actively, the creative germs of the coming performance. This exchange does not take place at the level of discussion either; it is in essence an exchange of our life experience, a reciprocal offering of the signs of our biographies, of what I would call our „arrière-être" If someone chooses to call this melting-pot of creation „Grotowski", fair enough. But it must be clearly understood that this is only a symbol and that the reality is a division of responsibilities among the members of a group to which I am happy to belong.

Even in the development of the various exercises which have been designed in the Theatre Laboratory to prepare the actor for this creative role, I am not the sole or the unique source. Each of the members of our group has, in the course of our experiments, had his share in making them what they are. It is very difficult to give everyone his exact due, but it would be doing less than justice if I did not single out the special contribution that has been made by Ryszard Cieślak.

All this implies that the Theatre Laboratory has no „star" among its members. Nevertheless it is true that in each production one or more of the performers has a more prominent part to play in the enactment of a proposed theme. He, or they, then become the „roots", so to speak, of the production, which therefore depends more essentially on their contribution since ultimately it stands or falls by their performance.

In Marlowe's **Faustus** Zbigniew Cynkutis appeared as Faustus and Mephistopheles was revealed as a sort of androgyne splitting into Rena Mirecka and Antoni Jahołkowski. In **The Constant Prince** the creative act of Ryszard Cieślak determined the axis of the whole production. But Rena Mirecka as Fenixana and Antoni Jahołkowski as the King formed the other pole which acted in relationship to that embodied by Ryszard Cieślak in the part of the Prince.

In **Acropolis** the problem is even more complex. Not for nothing was designer Józef Szajna billed as co-director. As soon as Auschwitz was seen to be our central theme, I immediately thought of him, not only because he is a brilliant man of the theatre but also because he had been a prisoner in Auschwitz. His contribution to the production was not that of an ordinary designer. He suggested various props and costumes which we used, in the course of creation, like musical instruments on which we invented our own chords.

At the same time this production could not have lived without Zygmunt Molik who created the role of Jacob. He was, in the sense suggested earlier, the „root" and the protagonist of the whole performance. When family reasons forced him to leave us for a year, it proved impossible to play **Acropolis.** And if Rena Mirecka (Rebecca-Cassandra), who created an indispensible counterpoint, had gone we would also have been obliged to drop **Acropolis.**

In effect the same could be said of all the actors in the cast. Each of them, Antoni Jahołkowski, Ryszard Cieślak, Zbigniew Cynkutis, quarried from his biography an element of expression which contributed to the cohesion of the group and without which it would have fallen apart.

Even in the case of later recruits to the production, such as Stanisław Scierski, who did not take part in its preparation and did not play a „root-role", their presence modified its living contours to the point where it is no longer conceivable without them.

Apocalypsis cum Figuris sprang from the creative explorations of the actors themselves. Inspiration and challenge is all I can take credit for in this case. The scenario of the production came into being **after** and **as a result** of the experiments of the group.

In nearly all our productions the vision of the acting area was conceived in collaboration with our architect, Jerzy Gurawski, who on this count can also be called their co-author.

If I have felt it necessary to make this explanation, it is not out of politeness or gracious condescension to my colleagues. What I have written should not be judged as rhetoric or tactics. Its only aim is to describe the actual facts ot the matter and to remove any ambiguities about the reality of the creative method associated with my name.

JERZY GROTOWSKI

A Word about Poor Theatre

LUDWIK FLASZEN IN CONVERSATION WITH LESZEK KOLANKIEWICZ

LUDWIK FLASZEN was a co-founder and co-producer of Grotowski's Teatr Laboratorium throughout its existence (1959-1984), and its director during the early 1980s. A critic, writer, and long-time partner of Grotowski in creative dialogue, Flaszen is also a practitioner who has led paratheatrical sessions and acting workshops in many countries. His volume of literary writings *Głowa i mur* (The Head and the Wall, 1958) was circulated underground in Poland due to its prohibition by the censors. He is author of *Cyrograf* (Pact with the Devil, 1971, 1974, 1996; in French, 1990), a collection of essays and short prose on the situation of the individual within totalitarian systems. A volume of his essays about theatre entitled *Teatr skazany na magię* (Theatre Sentenced to Practise Magic, 1983) contains texts related to his collaborations with Grotowski and his contributions in forming the creative approach of the Teatr Laboratorium. Since 1984, following the theatre's dissolution, Flaszen has lived in Paris. He debuted as a director in France with *Les Rêveurs* (The Dreamers, 1989) after Dostoevsky, which also toured in Italy, and he specialises in texts by Dostoevsky, Kafka, and Beckett. In 2014 he received an honorary doctorate from the University of Turin. His collected writings were published in English as Ludwik Flaszen, *Grotowski & Company*, trans. by Andrzej Wojtasik with Paul Allain, ed. by Paul Allain with Monika Blige (Abingdon and New York: Routledge Icarus, 2013; in Italian and Polish, 2014).

This conversation was transcribed by Iwona Gutowska and edited by Monika Blige from a public event held at the Grotowski Institute, Wrocław, on 16 January 2007. It was originally published as: 'Słowo o teatrze ubogim', *Didaskalia*, 88 (2008), 73-80.

Leszek Kolankiewicz: Ludwik, a moment ago we heard your 'Commentary on the Commentaries', which has been prepared for the volume *Misterium zgrozy i urzeczenia* (Mysterium Tremendum et Fascinans) – the volume of which the first and not a small part constitutes a corpus of your texts about Grotowski's and your theatre's performances.[1] I will start with a neologism which you've used: 'my theatre-writing'. You don't say 'my writing about theatre'; you don't simply say 'my writing', but 'my theatre-writing'. This can be associated with 'life-writing', which means a way of making art through words (I don't say literature) that was characteristic of Edward Stachura,[2] and which is how it was described by Henryk Bereza.[3] Stachura formulated words with a such a profound connection with experience, with life practice, that it resulted in a tangle, an inseparable adhesion – life-writing. What about you? Firstly, therefore, I would like to ask about the sense of this adhesion in your case: how do you experience this theatre-writing after these years, how do you think about it now?

Ludwik Flaszen: It was Grotowski's and my paleo-epoch. It was the time of Genesis. And this creature called a group, this creature

Opposite page:
Reprint of the document highlighting the collaborative nature of the Laboratorium's work, distributed with touring performances from 1969, and signed by Jerzy Grotowski.

[1] Flaszen's text was published in English as: Ludwik Flaszen, 'A Commentary on the Commentaries' [*Komentarz do komentarzy*], in *Grotowski & Company*, pp. 54-57. The Polish volume mentioned by Kolankiewicz is *Misterium zgrozy i urzeczenia. Przedstawienia Jerzego Grotowskiego i Teatru Laboratorium*, ed. by Janusz Degler and Grzegorz Ziółkowski (Wrocław: Grotowski Institute, 2006). Eds.

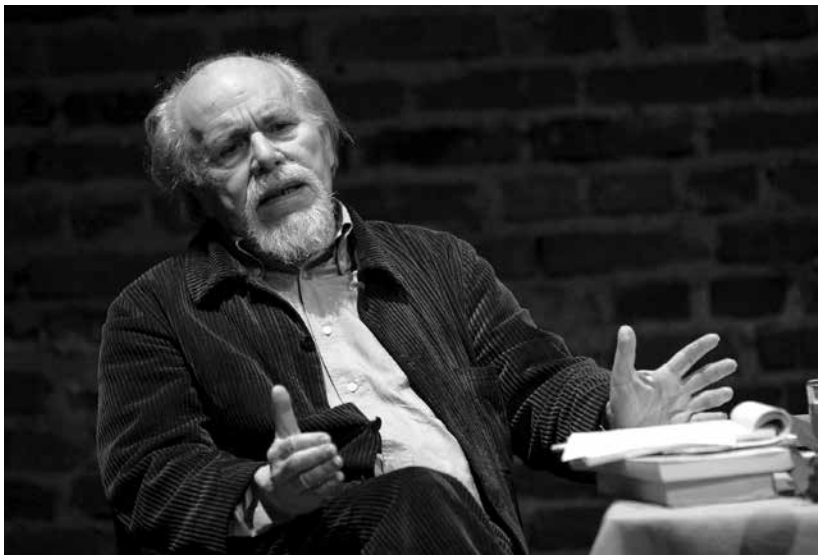
[2] Edward Stachura (1937-1979) was a poet, outsider, wanderer, and prose author. Stachura was known for living his life as much as writing it, for his aspiration was to connect life and literature as much as possible. Trans.

[3] Henryk Bereza (1926-2012) was a Polish literary critic, long-term editor of the Warsaw literary journal *Twórczość*, and one of the publishers of Edward Stachura's collected writings. Eds.

called the Teatr Laboratorium, this creature called Grotowski emerged out of some kind of primeval mud, from the clay of Genesis. [When asked by the Grotowski Institute,] did I agree straightaway to publish these texts? Yes, because I thought 'why not'? One day somebody will dig them out and publish them anyway. I didn't want just to leave them in a file because academics often like browsing through files.[4] I look at this – as you can see – with distance and some sense of humour, but I would say that my approach is twofold. There is derision, irony, but also apotheosis, as in Grotowski's performances. It is very useful that these paleo-texts have shaken off the archive's dust. These writings are like fragments of discovered gospels, almost canonical. And they aren't the gospel according to Judas.

Kolankiewicz: What do you mean by 'almost canonical'? Are you suggesting that 'apocryphal' means 'almost canonical'?

Flaszen: I wouldn't dare to say that this is a gospel, because Grotowski is not a gospel; it is apocrypha. And that is the only way to speak about it. But the fact that these paleo-texts were taken out from the archive's dust and that they are published in a volume is undoubtedly useful. This is evidence of our work with Grotowski. I was a persistent partner to Grotowski and some of the 'magic formulae', which have entered the history of the theatre, appeared in our dialogue with each other. For instance, 'poor theatre'. This was a flash of insight. Grace visited me and one day I said, 'a poor theatre', as if of its own accord. I'm not making it up; there is quite significant evidence for this in Eugenio Barba's writing.[5] When I look at my literary past – when I was a critic, an essayist, and a reviewer – I realise that I am actually an author of short and very concise texts. This is perhaps why, due to the density of the text, the meaning is sometimes obscure.



Ludwik Flaszen at the Grotowski Institute. Wrocław, 16 January 2007. Photograph: Łukasz Giza.

Kolankiewicz: What can be found in the volume of your writing – that is, the texts which were originally commentaries on the performances and were published in theatre programmes – is a new kind of writing. As you said, you had the tendency to write short texts. In writing about theatre, the short form fulfils its role extremely well: [your writing] is an indispensable commentary on the performance, obviously in various incarnations.

Flaszen: Thank you very much.

Kolankiewicz: As far as I know, nobody else does it like that – it is a kind of invention. But picking you up on an inconsistency, in your 'Commentary on the Commentaries', there is the sentence: 'The prolific production of verbiage accompanied our theatrical activities from the very beginning'. And then you say at the end: 'If these humble texts…'.[6] They are humble in terms of size, but there is quite a big collection of them… All of them are short. So what do you mean by 'the prolific production of verbiage' and 'humble texts'? Perhaps your irony is not accidental when you say 'prolific'. At the beginning, you [the company] weren't some kind of avant-garde 'appearing from nowhere', you were a

[4] An ironic reference to the secret services' files, a hot issue in Poland. It was, for example, the subject of a performance by Polish group Teatr Ósmego Dnia (Theatre of the Eighth Day), in *Teczki* (The Files, 2007). Eds.

[5] See Eugenio Barba, *Land of Ashes and Diamonds: My Apprenticeship in Poland*, trans. by Judy Barba (Aberystwyth: Black Mountain Press, 1999).

[6] Flaszen, 'A Commentary on the Commentaries', pp. 54 and 56. Eds.

true avant-garde – you produced manifestos. But only at the very beginning. However, this was never 'prolific production'. If it was some kind of production, it did not yet have the weight of your theatre-writing. Perhaps it could be said that in those days you gave up what was your literary calling. And let me quote another of your fragments: 'And despite already being known in literary circles, sometimes, by dint of necessity, I had to relinquish the beauty of a text, signed by me, though all in a good cause. History has compensated me for my short-term literary sufferings'.[7] [The audience laughs.] This is a characteristic fragment pierced with self-irony. I would like you to speak about struggling with Grotowski over words – almost like in a boxing ring, at work, as workers of words. This is some kind of a paradox: as an eminent theatre and literary critic coming from the school of Kazimierz Wyka, you start to write at the beginning of this adventure and later, for the whole of the adventure, you write about a theatre on which it is so difficult to write.[8] About a theatre which is really difficult to define in words. This is a kind of destiny. Perhaps this is where the source of suffering lies.

Flaszen: Grotowski used to correct my texts and introduce a bit of clap-trap.

Kolankiewicz: They were too good…

Flaszen: I need to say here that Grotowski and I were connected by the fact that we were both castaways in those days. Something had ended in our lives. He was a castaway – how to put it – of a political nature. As an activist of the Polish October.[9] I was, in a way, a castaway as well. When I offered him the theatre in Opole, he immediately agreed. In return, I was at that time, in 1956, kicked out of [the journal] *Życie Literackie* (Literary Life) for defending – against the opinion of the main editor – the young radicals of the Polish October, of whom Grotowski was one of the leaders. I was lonely, unemployed. But paths were open for me; I had work with *Przegląd Kulturalny* (Cultural Review), which was quite a decent journal in those days. But as I say, in the context of those days. There was a degree of freedom and some breadth of latitude. Among other places, there is evidence of the provenance of 'poor theatre' in *Przegląd Kulturalny*. In one of the columns, I quoted, in fact ironically, Stefan Świeżawski, a wonderful Catholic philosopher who published an article entitled 'Środki ubogie w życiu Kościoła' (Poor Means in the Life of the Church) in *Tygodnik Powszechny* (The General Weekly).[10] And there were 'poor means' and 'rich means'. The poor means were persuasion and the rich means were force. This force meant an Inquisition. I liked that and it stuck in my memory. So, 'poor theatre'…

Kolankiewicz: You said that you were both at some kind of crossroads in life…

Flaszen: We were castaways to some extent. Something had to be changed. I had to find a job and that is how – for the second time, by the way – I went into the theatre, because I already had some theatre experience. One day, *Życie Literackie's* editor-in-chief, Władysław Machejek, who was a communist from a peasant background, sent us editors who represented the intelligentsia to do some so-called fieldwork to make sure that our journal was not too elite and that it could connect with the lives of the people. So I said I would go to the Teatr Słowackiego (Słowacki Theatre), where rehearsals of Gorky's *Yegor Bulychov and Others* were taking place, and would write about the artists there. And that is how I found myself at the Teatr Słowackiego. I watched the rehearsals eagerly. But after my stay there I didn't write

[7] Ibid., p. 28.

[8] Kazimierz Wyka (1910-1975) was a famous historian, literary critic, and professor at the Jagiellonian University in Kraków. Trans.

[9] A reference to the radical changes in Poland that took place during the second half of 1956 and involved the taking of power by a reformist faction of the Communist Party, led by Władysław Gomułka. These events, often named the 'Polish October', resulted in the regime's temporary liberalisation – the 'thaw' after the harsh 'winter' of Stalinism in Poland. Trans.

[10] See Ludwik Flaszen, 'Pisane w upale' (Written in the Heat Wave), *Przegląd Kulturalny*, 29 (18-25 July 1957), 3.

A session of delegates of the Związek Młodzieży Socjalistycznej (Socialist Youth Association), January 1957. Jerzy Grotowski is standing at the rear, to the right of the column.
Photograph: CAF/PAP.

an article. In fact, I didn't write anything at all – I got an offer to become their literary manager. It was 1954, probably autumn. Being a literary manager then was quite something! I was very talented then and I was successful, a bit like one of Napoleon's marshals in their youth. Working at the Teatr Słowackiego was a very interesting experience. That is how I learned theatre. I wandered around backstage; I got to know all the actors. Among them were – so it turned out later – Grotowski's teachers from drama school, and I used to drink vodka with them. It was an incredible experience to be at the Teatr Słowackiego, with all of its tradition. There are ghosts there. Wyspiański followed the plots of his plays backstage there, and this is where I soaked up the theatre. I would say that it was both positive and negative. I got to understand the mechanism of theatre and, I have to admit, it was a mixture of fascination and some kind of dislike. The issue of power, the issue of hierarchy – the collective organism, in the service of art. To put it briefly, it was an idiosyncratic leviathan.

Kolankiewicz: So was this the source of your dislike for the big cultural institution?

Flaszen: I thought that an artist needed to be free and alone. And a thinker, a critic, and even a reviewer, should be a *klerk* [an intellectual free from ideologies and political dependencies]. And in this, we operate

together. The collective functions and various cliques play their games backstage. So I thought – I thought! – this was fascinating for me. Such a leviathan is a very interesting creature. I need to add that I was terribly naïve, I was a klutz. Of course, I was quite sharp, lucid, and clear in writing…

Kolankiewicz: And, as you said yourself, you were very talented…

Flaszen: Enormously talented, but so incapable in everyday life situations and a very poor diplomat. And I understood that theatre is a country, a polis – a very interesting phenomenon. Apart from that, I was – as a biologically overweight person – fascinated by the fact that this leviathan is corporeal. I had very interesting colleagues at work: Tadeusz Kantor, Andrzej Pronaszko[11] – who was the founder of Polish stage cubism and famous scenographer for *Dziady* (Forefathers' Eve) – and Karol Frycz.[12] You could imagine it was still Młoda Polska (Young Poland).[13] Also, Ludwik Solski, a legend of the Polish national theatre, was my colleague.[14] The one who played Wiarus in the historic premiere of *Warszawianka* (The Song of Warsaw).[15] He was almost a hundred years old then. Not long afterwards, I played the role of an honoured guard near his coffin. All of history was represented at the Teatr Słowackiego in those days. Therefore, I had direct and personal contact with Młoda Polska and with the avant-garde of the 1918-1939 period, as well as with young visual artists like Kantor. In spite of my duties as a member of the Kraków theatre management, I kept in close contact with them and they sneered at our esteemed venue…

Kolankiewicz: It was a wonderful pléiade of scenographers or rather, so to speak, 'builders of stage backdrops'.

Flaszen: They were real artists. In fact, the visual artists were the real avant-garde; they were the searchers for the absolute in art. But wait a minute… Why was I a castaway? One day I handed in my notice. A division of the theatre had taken place, because during the Stalinist years it all had been one combine – all the theatres in Kraków had been connected, so that it was easier to control them. I was delegated to the so-called Teatr Poezji (Poetry Theatre) or Teatr Kameralny (Chamber Theatre). At the time of the thaw, when free choice was possible, I didn't want – just for the sake of having a job – to support this theatre that I disliked. So, I was a castaway. I was disappointed with the Polish October. Very shortly afterwards, the censors confiscated my first book entitled – nomen omen – *Głowa i mur* (The Head and the Wall). Grotowski, whom I hardly knew then, and I were in a similar situation. And suddenly, a miracle! In spring 1959, because I was well-known in those days, I received an offer to take over the Teatr 13 Rzędów (Theatre of the 13 Rows) in Opole. A result of the thaw apparatchiks' provincial ambitions! I was modest and said, as a non-theatre-practitioner, that I could take on the literary management, but I would find them a candidate for the position of director. And after giving it a moment's thought, I suggested Grotowski. Grotowski was known as someone odd and not very talented. A very strange man, a fat baby with the mouth of a gourmet, and a rhetoricist. He was always carrying a briefcase. I could smell school on him. There was in him something of the teacher – which, by the way, he was. And that is how our destinies became connected. We immediately

[11] Andrzej Pronaszko (1888-1961) was a painter and scenographer and a well-known representative of the Polish avant-garde and the modernist style in the 1920s and 1930s. Trans.

[12] Karol Frycz (1877-1963) was a scenographer, painter and theatre director, considered to be the founder of modern Polish stage design. Trans.

[13] Młoda Polska (Young Poland) is a term used to describe the modernist period in Polish visual arts, literature, and music, covering roughly the years 1890-1918. Trans.

[14] Ludwik Solski (1855-1954) was a famous actor, theatre director, and theatre manager of various theatres in Warsaw and Kraków. He is now patron of the Państwowa Wyższa Szkoła Teatralna in Kraków (State Higher Theatre School). Trans.

[15] *Warszawianka* is the title of Stanisław Wyspiański's play from 1898, which refers to the November Uprising of 1830 during the Partitions, when Poland was divided up between Russia, Prussia, and the Austro-Hungarian Empire. The play-title was a direct reference to a song written in support of the Uprising. Trans.

got on with each other and as it turned out, he – the educated Hinduist – was dreaming about his ashram. I also hoped that Opole would be some kind of a hermitage, the right place for a *klerk*, since I very much wanted to be one. I wanted to be an intellectual who is independent and who does not participate in earthly struggles, but who protects values. Values that can also be metaphysical… My ideal was Karol Irzykowski, a wonderful critic from the 1918-1939 period, who was referred to as a heroic *klerk*.[16]

Kolankiewicz: You belonged to a group of critics from Kraków which is legendary today, but which was already famous back then. By recalling just now your theatre experiences as literary manager at the Teatr Słowackiego – discovering theatre from backstage, from the perspective of rehearsals, from theatrical craft – perhaps you have provided an answer regarding your approach to the theatre, which is quite unusual for a literary man. Perhaps that is why you emphasise the connections with famous scenographers and that you came to theatre not through the word, not through drama, not even through playwriting.

Flaszen: I came to the theatre through playwriting as well, since during the thaw period the texts of Beckett and Ionesco – inventive writing for the stage – started to arrive in Poland.

Kolankiewicz: I think that this connects you somehow with Konstanty Puzyna,[17] who also learned theatre from behind the scenes during the management of the Teatr Wilama Horzycy in Toruń.[18] Puzyna, a specialist in Polish literature who published Witkacy, also dealt with what he called 'writing on stage'.[19] I want to ask you about your attitude to words in the theatre – while we are talking about avant-garde theatre – I want to ask about your attitude to the plays that were discovered then: because it was a great discovery in the middle of the 1950s which was vitally connected to their being staged. But you already had your own complex approach to this matter.

Flaszen: Yes, it was an approach that was complex or rather delicate, as they say today. A very delicate matter. I was a close friend of Puzyna's, we studied Polish literature together and he was already a great theatre critic then. He had started when he was seventeen and he was wonderful at it. A theatre expert. A proper critic. He was, in a way, Horzyca's theatre student. By the way, Horzyca was also my colleague at the Teatr Kameralny in Kraków. So, with Puzyna, we spoke a lot about theatre while wandering around Kraków at night. I think I owe something to those conversations.

Kolankiewicz: And now please tell us about your attitude to the avant-garde and to words.

Flaszen: Puzyna was an advocate of the theatre as an autonomous art. And in those days, theatre was a machine to stage dramatic literature… Later it turned out that Mrożek, who had been writing theatre reviews for [the newspaper] *Echo Krakowa* (The Kraków Echo), had moved to Warsaw and was looking for a successor.[20] So I became a reviewer. Some of the reviews are published in my *Teatr skazany na magię* (Theatre Sentenced to Practise Magic).[21]

---

[16] Karol Irzykowski (1873-1944) was a Polish writer, literary critic, and film theoretician. Trans.

[17] Konstanty Puzyna (1929-1989) was a famous theatre critic, essayist, and poet. He studied at the Jagiellonian University and represented the Kraków school of literary criticism. He worked in various theatres as literary manager and later became firstly the Deputy Chief Editor and then the Chief Editor of the renowned Polish theatre journal, *Dialog*, a prestigious monthly founded in 1956, dedicated mainly to contemporary playwriting. Each volume contains new Polish plays, translations of plays from other languages, interpretations, and essays. Trans.

[18] Wilam Horzyca (1889-1959) was a theatre manager, writer, translator, critic, and director, who created Polish Monumental Theatre. Trans.

[19] Stanisław Ignacy Witkiewicz a.k.a. Witkacy (1885-1939) was a playwright, novelist, painter, photographer, and philosopher. He was one of the main representatives of the avant-garde of the twentieth century, known for creating a theatre theory of *czysta forma* (pure form). Trans.

[20] Sławomir Mrożek (1930-2013) was a Polish dramatist, writer and journalist, whose writing is associated with the theatre of the absurd. His most famous plays are *Tango* (1964) and *Emigranci* (The Emigrants, 1974). Trans.

[21] Ludwik Flaszen, *Teatr skazany na magię*, ed. by Henryk Chłystowski (Kraków and Wrocław:

Kolankiewicz: That book is a collection of reviews.

Flaszen: I became a fighter for the autonomy of the theatre. I used to read Craig and Meyerhold, whose work I dug out from the storerooms of the Jagiellonian University. I need to say that, like Grotowski, I wasn't immediately a member of the avant-garde. There are my texts, which were published again a few years ago in a book *Cyrograf* (Pact with the Devil), and they represent some of the dilemmas of the Polish intellectual who needs to choose between social duty, national responsibility, and a duty to art.[22] The problem was Gombrowiczian and it concerned how to be an individual, how not to depend on institutional and civic duties, simply how to be an artist.[23] This, in fact, was an idea from Młoda Polska. Because we used to meet the ghost of Przybyszewski.[24] Also, Kraków and Wyspiański – all of this was in the air. I would say that Grotowski and I were children of Młoda Polska. In those days, you weren't allowed to say that. But it is clearly visible today that Awangarda Krakowska (the Kraków Avant-garde)[25] – Przyboś, Peiper, Tytus Czyżewski[26] – continued the ideas of Młoda Polska. Those poets tried to overcome the *słowolejstwo* ('word-waffling') that is associated with Młoda Polska, but in fact this primeval loam gave birth to the modern outsider, the modern artist on the banks of the Vistula River and under Wawel [the Royal Castle in Kraków]! I think I'm speaking 'in Gombrowicz' now. Let's not disturb Przybyszewski's demon.

The element of rebellion can also be found in Wyspiański's work. If we read *Akropolis* carefully, to devout ears this play appears as something terrible. What happens [in the play]? There are some lovers who are hiding in the side naves of a cathedral in order to make love. Is that right, Professor Kolankiewicz? And at the end, there is a coffin falling apart, which contains the remains of Saint Stanisław, and this coffin is being dropped by angels who say: 'O, jakże ręce, ręce bolą dźwigać we wiecznej męce' (Oh, how the hands ache lifting this in everlasting torture). And there is Christ/Apollo who appears at the end as a symbol of power, brightness, solar divinity, so to speak. This is a different Christ – one who doesn't suffer, doesn't worry. As literary historians know, *Akropolis* was considered the first counterpart of futurism. It was a fertiliser for futurism in Poland. How does it happen that faithfulness to tradition in Poland is connected with rebellion and heresy? 'Poezjo, jesteś tyranem' (Poetry, you are a tyrant) – throw out these poets, enough is enough, enough books and literature. By the way, the same thing occurs in Mickiewicz's work…

Kolankiewicz: You're talking about something that is a Romantic 'wing' in you…

Flaszen: This is rather more neo-Romanticism.

Kolankiewicz: Even if you're neo-Romantic, you don't stop being Romantic…

Flaszen: I want to emphasise here: I'm neo-Romantic.

Kolankiewicz: You're also a Romantic – you need to be a rebel. Faithfulness to the Romantic tradition means rebellion.

Flaszen: Yes, it does. And I think that Grotowski's practice has proved this. We really were (or are?) – and the traces of this are in the book – the legitimate sons, the legitimate children of Romanticism.[27]

Wydawnictwo Literackie, 1983). This volume is not translated into English, although many of the texts included in the collection appear in Flaszen's *Grotowski & Company*. Eds.

[22] See Ludwik Flaszen, *Cyrograf* (Kraków: Wydawnictwo Literackie, 1996; revised and expanded edn). Eds.

[23] Witold Gombrowicz (1904-1969) was a famous Polish novelist, playwright, and essayist. Trans.

[24] Stanisław Przybyszewski (1968-1927) was a novelist, decadent poet, and symbolist dramatist who wrote in Polish and German. Trans.

[25] Awangarda Krakowska was a group of innovative poets and avant-garde writers associated with the Kraków literary magazine *Zwrotnica* from 1922 to 1927. Eds.

[26] Julian Przyboś (1901-1970), Tadeusz Peiper (1891-1969), and Tytus Czyżewski (1880-1945) were among the main representatives and leaders of Awangarda Krakowska. Peiper, who founded the journal *Zwrotnica* in 1921, was the author of the group's programme. Eds.

[27] The book reference is to *Misterium zgrozy i urzeczenia*. Trans.

Kolankiewicz: Even if you [the group] are interested in avant-garde texts, you still represent the Romantic approach. Then you recognise this wholly, you stop denying this and you take the texts of Marlowe, Wyspiański, and Calderón (although in Słowacki's translation). You yourself recognised this in one of your texts, which is a wonderful analysis entitled 'Po awangardzie'.[28] But what do you do? You bring something essential to this whole current in Poland and in the twentieth century. And what you bring is something that chimes with what appeared in Polish art after 1956, particularly in Białoszewski's work.[29] That is, this kind of deconstruction of language that appears in Białoszewski's work – a turn towards colloquial speech, in which Romantic myths are realised. For instance, his *Szara msza* (Grey Mass): a domestic and popular mass, which nonetheless is a vehicle for myths; also his *Osmędeusze*, as some kind of backyard *Dziady*.[30] Poetry as a ceremony. If you practise words in your theatre, these Romantic words, you do it in a ceremonial way, and your rituals are blasphemous – but at the same time they are also domestic. And this is where you encounter Białoszewski. This is our Romantic tradition, intimate and limited to a small room, to a tiny chapel, to some kind of alleyway. This isn't monumental theatre, this is not what was dominant in the first half of the twentieth century.

Flaszen: I have an awful answer for this.

Kolankiewicz: Say it! [The audience laughs.]

Flaszen: Our theatre, 'poor theatre', is a 'mini-monumental' theatre, because this theatre is indeed monumental. This is not a chamber theatre.

Kolankiewicz: 'Mini-monumental' sounds like an odd idea.

Flaszen: Yes, mini-monumental. You see, I came prepared for this [the audience laughs], because I knew this problem would arise.

Kolankiewicz: Ladies and gentlemen, although appearances would suggest otherwise, we haven't pre-arranged this.

Flaszen: There is continuity – *Dziady*, Wyspiański, and so on, up to Grotowski. Building poor theatre means making monumental theatre in a small studio, and that room in Opole was smaller than this one here. It was like a miracle. Even on film, you can still see that this is a monumental theatre.

Kolankiewicz: But in what way do you mean that?

Flaszen: Monumental means done with sharp tools, it means great expression. There are signs and structures, great scores.

Kolankiewicz: So, your theatre is not intimate in the sense that it stages – for instance – American drama.

Flaszen: But equally this is not theatre in a room at home. [The latter] happened mainly during Martial Law.[31] Or even much earlier, during the Partitions.[32] That was simply 'home theatre'. In people's living rooms, so-called images of life were presented and they had a patriotic goal.

Somebody from the audience: Białoszewski had his home theatre...

Kolankiewicz: It was the Teatr na Tarczyńskiej (Theatre in Tarczyńska Street) and later on Mokotowska Street, but also Kantor in Kraków during the war with his *Balladyna* and *The Return of Odysseus* [Powrót Odysa].[33] What then would you call Kantor's *Return*

---

[28] Ludwik Flaszen, 'After the Avant-garde', in *Grotowski & Company*, pp. 115-20. Eds.

[29] Miron Białoszewski (1922-1983) was a poet, novelist, playwright, and actor who in 1955 co-founded a 'home theatre' in Warsaw, the Teatr na Tarczyńskiej (Theatre in Tarczyńska Street), where he staged his own experimental and avant-garde plays. In 1958 he founded the Teatr Osobny (Separate Theatre) in his own flat on Dąbrowski Square in Warsaw. The theatre, which existed until 1963, was a private and independent artistic initiative – unique under the communist regime. Eds.

[30] *Osmędeusze* is a neologism invented by Białoszewski. Its precise meaning is untranslatable into English. Trans.

[31] Martial Law was introduced in Poland on 13 December 1981. Trans.

[32] The Partitions is the term used for when Poland was divided up between Russia, Prussia, and the Austro-Hungarian Empire – a period that lasted from 1792 until 1918. Trans.

[33] Kantor staged Słowacki's *Balladyna* in 1943 and Wyspiański's *The Return of Odysseus* in 1944. Trans.

of Odysseus – is this monumental theatre or chamber theatre? I would like to make sure that we understand you properly.

Flaszen: In this case, we are dealing here with the avant-garde theatre and this is something slightly different. I don't know, Kantor's legendary Wyspiański… We would need to see it from the other side of the ontological curtain possibly… I don't know what Kantor's Wyspiański was. Based on photos, I can only imagine that this was a quasi-monumental theatre, but probably with an emphasis on words, and it was very small due to the conditions of the occupation at that time.

Kolankiewicz: I think we probably understand each other now. You mean that this is theatre to which the spectator cannot go with impunity, as was written on the door of Magdalena Stryjeńska's flat in Kraków, where Kantor presented *The Return of Odysseus*.[34]

Flaszen: But avant-garde in the classical sense meant something different. It wasn't monumental theatre, but experimental theatre, zero theatre, anti-theatre…

Kolankiewicz: You're obviously talking about Kantor – about Witkacy in Kantor's theatre.

Flaszen: Not only. These small avant-garde theatres constitute a separate category. I would say that Kantor returned to monumental theatre with his production of *The Dead Class* [Umarła klasa].[35] It was again a monumental theatre in miniature. A mini one.

Kolankiewicz: If I understand you well, you're talking about the vehicle of myth. A myth appears in *The Dead Class* thanks to Schulz: this reality of a small class in some kind of village school is elevated to become a myth. Concurrently, it is a degraded reality – as is usual in Schulz's and Kantor's work.[36]

Flaszen: This is the poetry of the theatre, but not an intimate theatre.

Kolankiewicz: Perhaps for you intimate means devoid of the mythical layer, and monumental theatre has some mythical content.

Flaszen: Intimate could also mean connected with words and recitation. The theatre of recitation, like for instance Kotlarczyk's Teatr Rapsodyczny (Rhapsodic Theatre).[37] A theatre of words, or even a theatre of reading. This is a different genre.

Kolankiewicz: This is clear: your reference to myth cannot be realised in words. Your theatre is autonomous and it is based on the experience of theatre artists from the first part of the twentieth century like Wyspiański, Leon Schiller,[38] but it is also limited to more modest dimensions, and, as a result, it is of a greater charge, it's more explosive.

Flaszen: You've put it accurately. This is, without a doubt, a theatre of a very specific energy. Grotowski's actor is – so to say – an energetic actor. He is not an actor of expression and form, even though he has a precise form and unusual expression. The actor's actions function as a transformation of energy. This appeared quite early on.

Kolankiewicz: Where would you locate that, in which performance?

Flaszen: It began in *Dziady* or perhaps even earlier, in *Shakuntala*, which was a theatre of signs, an ironic [version of an] oriental theatre, with a precise score of the body and voice. Here, we are close to the domain of pure theatre. Grotowski and I had an argument, which took place secretly, because we

[34] This is a reference to Tadeusz Kantor's well-known phrase: 'Do teatru nie wchodzi się bezkarnie' (One cannot enter the theatre with impunity). Trans.

[35] *The Dead Class* (1975) is Kantor's best-known performance. Trans.

[36] Bruno Schulz (1892-1942) was a Polish Jewish writer, artist, literary critic, and graphic designer. Trans.

[37] The Teatr Rapsodyczny was founded as part of the underground in 1941 in Kraków and was led by Mieczysław Kotlarczyk (1908-1978). The most famous of its actors was Karol Wojtyła, the future Pope John Paul II. The theatre, which focused mainly on oratory, operated until 1967. Eds.

[38] Leon Schiller de Schildenfeld (1887-1954) was a theatre director, critic, theorist, and one of the representatives of the Polish monumental theatre of the interwar period. After the Second World War he ran *Teatr* magazine, was provost of the drama school in Łódź and in 1952 founded *Pamiętnik Teatralny* (Theatre Memoir), a distinguished journal devoted to the history of the theatre. Eds.

had agreed before that we would be honest only with each other. Our argument grew from the fact that at the beginning, Grotowski, despite the poor conditions in Opole, nevertheless made rich theatre: with a soundtrack from a tape recorder, with stage lights and costumes…

Kolankiewicz: You are talking about *Orpheus* and *Cain*.

Flaszen: Yes, I mean those pieces. It was rich theatre and the tape recorder was very important then. [The audience laughs.] But the mystery play was there from the very beginning.

Kolankiewicz: *Mystery Bouffe* by Mayakovsky?

Flaszen: No, not only. I mean the mystery play as a genre. If you take *Orpheus* – you can relate it to a mystery play.

Kolankiewicz: But this is only a theme.

Flaszen: Yes, the staging was slightly different, however the final… We need to publish in Poland this early work of Grotowski--as-dramaturg. The Italian edition is already published, with my commentaries.[39]

Kolankiewicz: Are you talking about Jean Cocteau?

Flaszen: 'World, thank you for existing | Thank you' – it was Grotowski who changed Cocteau. 'World, thank you for existing | Thank you for being an infinite and eternal dancer | Thank you for dancing your chaos…', and so on.[40] It was very Młoda Polska-like.

---

[39] *Il Teatr Laboratorium di Jerzy Grotowski 1959-1969. Testi e materiali di Jerzy Grotowski e Ludwik Flaszen con uno scritto di Eugenio Barba*, ed. by Ludwik Flaszen and Carla Pollastrelli, in collaboration with Renata Molinari (Pontedera: Fondazione Pontedera Teatro, 2001; 2nd edn. 2007).

[40] In Polish: 'Dziękujemy ci świecie, że jesteś | Dziękujemy ci, że jesteś tancerzem nieskończonym i wiecznym | Dziękujemy ci, że tańczysz chaos swój […]'. See Jerzy Grotowski, 'Inwokacja dla przedstawienia *Or-*

Jerzy Grotowski and Ludwik Flaszen against the backdrop of the set for Mayakovsky's *Mystery Bouffe* (1960). Photograph: Leonard Olejnik.

I think that Grotowski's writing was quite Młoda Polska-like.

Kolankiewicz: Excuse me, what do you mean by 'Grotowski's writing'?

Flaszen: I'm talking about what he wrote at the time, also including the earlier poems. All of it was in the Młoda Polska style. Now, I will talk precisely about – how to put it – the origins of Grotowski's worldview. It was indeed Młoda Polska-like, because his Hinduism was the Hinduism of Młoda Polska, inspired by the sources of that period, from books, from publications of Polish modernism. All those pranas and yogas…

Kolankiewicz: And tantras…

Flaszen: Yes, there was something like tantra as well…

Kolankiewicz: But all this was because of Józef Świtkowski – that is, because of the occultism of that period.[41]

Flaszen: This was also connected with Ludwik Szczepański.[42] I knew him personally, just imagine. As a young marshal in *Życie Literackie*, I didn't publish his texts because they were terribly old-fashioned, they were badly hand-written in an old exercise book. Szczepański, a gentleman with a bald head and in a black jumper, used to come to the editor's office on Basztowa Street. He was about eighty years old then. And I didn't even realise it was him – the patron of the Młoda Polska manifestos, the founder of Kraków's *Życie*. I think it was a certain missed opportunity in my life that I didn't become friends with him. Occult knowledge. Ludwik Szczepański can be identified also with Młoda Polska's protest, as he was against living in uniforms – against mediocrity, the grey crowd, mechanisation, and uniformity. Genius and individualism were needed. This closely resembled our later doctrines.

Kolankiewicz: So we're talking about outsiderism here and this makes sense. Because you were in Opole as in some kind of exile – totally in the provinces, although I don't want to reduce the role of this important cultural centre. It was outsiderism. But also, was this connected in part with the bohemians being against the philistines?

Flaszen: Of course, against the philistines. That is the meaning of *Dziady* – an outstanding individual who is trying to overcome mediocrity, and mediocrity means the world of business, rationality, and reason. So this Kordian, or this Konrad/Gustaw, in the so-called 'normal' world, are simply madmen.[43] And Jesus is also a madman; this is probably how he functioned in ancient Jerusalem. A miracle. Those characters were emblematic already in Młoda Polska and, later, in the counterculture in which Grotowski and I played our particular part.

Kolankiewicz: Through Saint Francis the Poor Man of Assisi. In this gesture of the renunciation of the world, of the duke's origins, of throwing off the garments, of laying oneself bare…

Flaszen: Laying oneself bare. If, for instance, you take Grotowski's readings such as *The Varieties of Religious Experience* by William James, [the book by] Paul Brunton…

Kolankiewicz: *A Search in Secret India*…[44]

Flaszen: Eduard Schuré's *The Great Initiates*, and many other similar books…

Kolankiewicz: In *The Great Initiates*, Jesus appears simply as one link in the chain of the world's greatest initiated.

Flaszen: In addition, there were the works on hypnosis. Grotowski studied this diligently.

Kolankiewicz: In order to hypnotise the audience.

Flaszen: I think there is such a book by Ochorowicz on hypnosis…[45]

---

feusz' (Invocation for the performance of *Orpheus*), *Materiały – Dyskusje*, 1 (October 1959). Eds.

[41] Józef Świtkowski (1876-1943) was a theosophist, photographer, translator, and editor of many books on yoga, magic, and the occult. Eds.

[42] Ludwik Szczepański (1872-1954) was a poet, a representative of Polish modernism, and founder and editor of Kraków art and literary magazine *Życie* (Life, 1897). Interested in occult studies, he wrote *Dziwy medyumizmu* (The Wonders of Mediumism, 1921). Eds.

[43] Kordian is the title character of Juliusz Słowacki's drama (1834) and Gustaw-Konrad is the main character of Mickiewicz's *Dziady* (1820-1832). Trans.

[44] The literal translation of Brunton's book in Polish is 'On the Paths of Yoga' (*Ścieżkami jogi*). Eds.

[45] Julian Ochorowicz (1850-1917) was an inventor,

Kolankiewicz: It would be useful to examine the occultist leitmotifs in the book *Towards a Poor Theatre*, which has just been published in Polish.[46] There are some very interesting traces.

Flaszen: Of course, such as ideoplasty. This, I think, comes from Świtkowski. The notion is very old and it suggests that through the concentration of the mind we can directly affect the material world. I must say that, strangely enough, I associate ideoplasty with Stanislavsky. This has to do with physical actions – the actor is supposed to cause a visible transformation in their partners, in their surroundings. And also telepathy, radiation. Astral bodies, subtle bodies… These are useful things and pragmatically functional – in work with the actor and in the actor's work.

Kolankiewicz: But this is also at the same time a bit Nietzschean, isn't it?

Flaszen: Of course, and Schopenhauerian, and even Bergsonian. This is the same fellowship. I used to 'Bergsonise', following Stanisław Brzozowski, who is also from Młoda Polska.[47]

Kolankiewicz: Ludwik, I would also add here Andrzej Towiański.[48]

Flaszen: Certainly, he is a master.

Kolankiewicz: In what sense is Towiański a master?

Flaszen: The Romantic tradition reached us through Młoda Polska, which we used to encounter in our grandfathers' flats. The Młoda Polska artists were strongly influenced by Towiański. Wyspiański was interested in Towiański. Irena Flaszen and I own the works of Towiański, which were published in the 1920s. They have Grotowski's signature on them. It's a gift from him. Usually, if Grotowski was keenly interested in something, he used to damage books, cross things out, tear them…

Kolankiewicz: He would take pages out…

Flaszen: Yes, I have such books from him. To me, a book is something sacred, but Grotowski treated books in a utilitarian way, he fed himself with them. So, for us, and especially for Grotowski, Towiański was a master, but in a funny way somehow. There was a dichotomy: a maestro for sure, but also a comical person. Towiański didn't write well, you can hardly read his work.

Kolankiewicz: But as we know, his most important text is *Biesiada z generałem* (A Wassail with the General), which is a spoken text.

Flaszen: Yes, this is orature.[49] Grotowski probably didn't use this volume that we are talking about, as there are no scribblings or missing pages. When we read this today, it is clear that Towiański was a listener, that he perceived things aurally. He could hear the cosmic harmony. He is a witness to the fact that cosmic harmony exists. I think it was *Orpheus*-like…

Kolankiewicz: And to make a tone [*ton*]. And to find a tone.[50]

Flaszen: To find a tone. And later, '*pot ducha*' (the soul's sweat). These are fascinating things – *pot ducha*. It sounds grotesque, but

philosopher, and psychologist, who researched and published extensively on occult phenomena, hypnosis, and telepathy. See for example his *Odczyty o magnetyzmie i hypnotyzmie* (Lectures on Magnetism and Hypnotism) from 1888 and 1889 published in Kraków in 1890. Eds.

[46] *Ku teatrowi ubogiemu* (Towards a Poor Theatre) was published by the Grotowski Institute in Grzegorz Ziółkowski's translation in January 2007. The Polish edition was prepared by Leszek Kolankiewicz. Trans.

[47] Stanisław Brzozowski (1878-1911) was a Polish philosopher and political writer. His major achievement was the elaboration of a philosophy of work. Trans.

[48] Andrzej Towiański (1799-1878) was a controversial Polish philosopher, charismatic mystical leader and founder (1842 in Paris) of the sect Koło Sprawy Bożej (Circle of God's Work), who greatly influenced Polish Romantic writers such as Adam Mickiewicz and Juliusz Słowacki, propagating messianic ideas. Followers of Towiański believed that the new era was coming which would open the doors to God's Kingdom on earth. They severely criticised institutionalised religions, especially the Catholic church. Eds.

[49] This term denoting oral literature was introduced by Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o in his book *Decolonizing the Mind: The Politics of Language in African Literature* (London: James Currey, 1986). It was first used in relation to Grotowski's work by Richard Schechner in his text 'Exoduction: Shapeshifter, shaman, trickster, artist, adept, director, leader, Grotowski' in *The Grotowski Sourcebook*, ed. by Lisa Wolford and Richard Schechner, 2nd edn (London and New York: Routledge, 2001), pp. 460-94. Eds.

[50] The idea of *ton* (tone) was central to Towiański's teaching. Eds.

we watch [Ryszard] Cieślak in Grotowski's *The Constant Prince*, even on the film recording, and this notion isn't preposterous. There is no division between a physiological and spiritual act, this is like one and the same thing, two aspects of the same substrate.

Kolankiewicz: And this is the effect of 'God's Work' [*Sprawa Boża*].[51]

Flaszen: I will confess here that, already in Opole, Jerzy and I searched for an appropriate figure for 'the master'. There was an acting task: how to be a Master from the outside. Eventually, Waldemar Krygier designed this outfit [for Jerzy]. [The audience laughs.] It was – how to describe it – an ascetic tunic, almost like a monk's tunic, but one you could wear for a social occasion. Towiański existed to us more like a kind of phantom than a direct inspiration, because our direct inspiration was Mickiewicz – Master Adam – and Brother Juliusz [Słowacki].[52] Rather it was them.

Kolankiewicz: In Mickiewicz's statement, which is very Towiański-like – 'It is more difficult to live the day well than to write a book' – you are Towiański-like yourself.[53] This has to do with continuous work on the spirit, it is about this *pot ducha*.

Flaszen: And about 'putting pressure on yourself' [*dociskanie się*].[54]

Kolankiewicz: 'God's pressure' [*docisk boży*].

Flaszen: Yes, 'let's put pressure on our spirits'. By the way, Grotowski and I wrote letters to each other in this kind of vein. It was one of our language games.

Kolankiewicz: For you, Romanticism wasn't The Word, it wasn't about poetic logos.

Flaszen: It was rather about the sound in the air.

Kolankiewicz: The tone.

Flaszen: Yes, the tone. But also it was about the tone of a Polish human being. If somebody is Polish, it is like being a person without a will, being somehow weak, being flabby. Enough of this, we needed tone. Power was needed. This is Wyspiański.

Kolankiewicz: Yes, Wyspiański. Particularly his *Wyzwolenie* (Liberation).[55]

Flaszen: Of course, *Wyzwolenie*. There is a problem of power, a problem of an act, a deed. Art is an act. It is more difficult to live the day well than to write a book. This is the spirit of surpassing art, going beyond art; it is also a Polish Romantic gesture. It is like with Mickiewicz, who broke his pen. Later, in the modernist period, the world-famous spiritual gesture of Leo Tolstoy in his book *What is Art?*, I would say, was a kind of aesthetic nihilism.[56] This varied in Poland, just as it did in Russia. Polish aesthetic nihilism was connected with a certain ethical and moralistic inclination. It had to do with the fact that there was so much suffering around and people, in this suffering, dealt with some kind of beauty, with worthless issues. Something different was needed; I cannot name it right now.

Kolankiewicz: Your nihilism is perhaps more profound, it is not simply aesthetic. Your approach was extreme. You weren't just outsiders, you were extremists of the soul.

Flaszen: Well, I was more moderate.

---

[51] See p. 28, n. 48. Eds.

[52] Flaszen is referring here to the Koło Sprawy Bożej's terminology, where Adam Mickiewicz was regarded as a Master-Bard and Juliusz Słowacki was one of the followers, i.e. brothers. Eds.

[53] In Polish: 'Trudniej dzień dobrze przeżyć niż napisać księgę'. This quotation comes from *Zdania i uwagi* (Statements and Remarks), Mickiewicz's poetic aphorisms extracted and paraphrased from works by Jacob Böhme, Angelus Silesius, and Louis Claude de Saint-Martin. The author worked on 163 aphorisms from 1833 to 1835. Some of the *distichs* were published in 1836 and 1844, and the whole selection appeared in 1869 in Paris. The first part of the *distich* reads: 'W słowach tylko chęć widzim, w działaniu potęgę' (In words we see only willingness, in action we see power). Eds.

[54] The idea of *docisk* (literally 'pressure') was essential in Polish mystical Romanticism. *Docisk* meant a challenge or obstacle which God places in front of a human being's soul in order to activate it on its path that leads towards him. Eds.

[55] *Wyzwolenie* is a play by Wyspiański written in 1902 and published the following year. The main character in the play is Konrad, taken from Mickiewicz's *Dziady* as Wyspiański's response to gaining the status of the nation's *wieszcz* (bard-prophet) after his publication of *Wesele* (The Wedding) in 1901. The action of *Wyzwolenie* takes place on the stage of a Kraków theatre. Trans.

[56] The original Russian title is *Что такое искусство?* (Chto takoe iskusstvo?, 1897). Trans.

Kolankiewicz: It was some kind of agreement between you and Grotowski… This is, in fact, a leitmotif that appears in the history of the Teatr Laboratorium. It has to do with the fact that Grotowski was to be Faustus and your role was to be more modest, like Wagner (to recall Marlowe here). Or perhaps simply, as in 'A Commentary on the Commentaries' – the role of Serenus Zeitblom, the narrator of *Dr Faustus*, who says: you see, the bombs are exploding here, the German towns are falling and I am telling you the history of our Faust, his ups and downs.[57] You, Ludwik, are granting yourself the more modest role of a critic and narrator.

Flaszen: Yes, actually Grotowski and I played around with this. I would say to him: 'you are a genius', and he would say: 'yes'. And I would say: 'I am your friend; you are a cruel genius, because you break through existence, fascinated by power and you need to fulfil yourself. This is infernal. And I am here, your partner and friend, Serenus Zeitblom'.

Kolankiewicz: A humanist.

Flaszen: A humanist, a man of literature.

Kolankiewicz: And a man of values.

Flaszen: Of values and a man of books. 'I will be the one to write your biography'.

Kolankiewicz: Your collective rebellion was extreme. It wasn't perhaps only aesthetic nihilism. I think that your negation of the world that you'd found was more radical. You rejected the world in what was then its current form.

Flaszen: This negation was Gnostic.

Kolankiewicz: It is true that there is a fall and that metaphysical experience goes with it. Everything needs to be rejected; everything needs to be completely cleansed; it needs to be burned up.

Flaszen: And this was conscious from quite an early stage. I call it 'apocalyptic sensitivity'. And Grotowski, who was always more expert in Hinduism than I was, used to say that this was *kali yuga*, that we were living in the *kali yuga* period. *Kali yuga* means…

Kolankiewicz: The age of the fall…

Flaszen: The end of a cosmic cycle and that the fire of the universe will follow and that this universe will be reborn. *Kali yuga*. We have a kind of catastrophism here. This is what Grotowski said in one of the texts that you edited. Or perhaps it was in 'Holiday' [*Święto*], which you didn't edit.

Kolankiewicz: No, I didn't edit 'Holiday'.

Flaszen: It was me then, as a scribe – a humble Serenus Zeitblom.

Kolankiewicz: Although the fact that you edited 'Holiday' wasn't known, so there we go: a piece of information for the historians.

Flaszen: It was a period when we suddenly broke with the theatre. We live in the age of the fall, the time of a breakthrough. The problem is not how to save the theatre; I've just reminded myself of a quote, which is probably known to you – but the problem is how to save yourself. Grotowski used the word 'save', but what he really meant was redemption. So it was not about how to redeem the world, but how to redeem yourself. This thought can be found in my paleo-texts, it can be deduced from there. Let's quote the last sentence from 'A Commentary on the Commentaries'.

Kolankiewicz: I'll do it right now. Would you like to read it or shall I do it?

Flaszen: You will do it better.

Kolankiewicz: I'm not sure, but here we go: 'I must confess that some of my own texts surprise me today. For example, my commentary on *Cain* (December 1959) proves that Grotowski and I wrestled seriously with Gnostic inspiration. Gnosticism? Gnosis? The Heresy of Marcionism?'[58]

Flaszen: I will quote one more sentence: 'For Byron, *Cain* was a noble rebel fighting against divine will and a world order that he found cruel and unjust. *Cain* stands for human dignity humiliated by the Godhead, in the name of reason that is, under the pressure of fear, limited with impassable boundaries. The murder committed by *Cain* of his brother is nothing but an extreme consequence of the

Jerzy Grotowski, Zbigniew Cynkutis, and Ludwik Flaszen receive state distinctions on the occasion of the twentieth anniversary of the Teatr Laboratorium. Wrocław, 16 November 1979.
Photograph: Jan Krzysztof Fiołek.

[57] A novel by Thomas Mann which was a point of reference for the Teatr Laboratorium's *Apocalypsis cum Figuris*. Eds.

[58] Flaszen, 'A Commentary on the Commentaries', p. 57.

world's moral order: after all, the austere God of the Old Testament enjoys bloody sacrifices'.[59] This is probably Marcionism. This motif appears in almost all of Grotowski's work, this is the motif of – how to put it – mocking creation. This is a kind of dialogue with the Creator: look, this is your work, look at these poor creatures, look at your crooked children. The world as a creation is an unsuccessful work. It would be Gnosticism, not Gnosis. A practical conclusion: the human being is not ready; the human being is yet to be born. And this can be done, only through their own efforts. This is also '*pot ducha*'. Perhaps, God needs some help? He has left some work unfinished and we will pick up these sparks.

Kolankiewicz: This motif is also Hasidic.

Flaszen: Yes, but not only, because this is Gnostic. Of course, there would also be other motifs. Mocking the human creature, mocking God's creation. I wrote about this earlier in a review of Camus' *Caligula*,[60] which was published in *Teatr skazany na magię*.[61] Caligula's excess is based on the mocking of creation. That is where the impetuosity of the expression and the shock come from. To be born. What does it mean? Father, mother, brother – what does it mean? This is inside us, perhaps an inner Christ. Once, decades ago, I spoke in a discussion organised by *Dialog* based on the idea that Romantic performance is an initiation through shock.[62]

[59] Flaszen, '*Cain* – Some Information', in *Grotowski & Company*, p. 60.

[60] Directed by Lidia Zamkow-Słomczyńska (the Teatr Kameralny, Kraków, 1963). Eds.

[61] Flaszen, 'Kaligula, wielki i papierowy' (Kaligula, Great and Made of Paper) in: *Teatr skazany na magię*, pp. 206-11.

[62] Translated as 'Eclecticists or Doctrinarians', in *Gro-*

If this is only words and the beautiful delivery of text, and a great intellectual fight with God, there is no power of initiation. Grotowski's performances were like a way, a labyrinth, they were initiatory experiences. I don't know whether you, the audience, know, but some people, those who deal in spiritual matters not with matters of art, know that you go through very difficult experiences on the way to initiation.

Kolankiewicz: This is why you're talking about the labyrinth.

Flaszen: But perhaps this isn't enough. In fact, Cieślak ran this workshop called *Labyrinth*. It is an initiatory experience. But I think that there is no labyrinth in the performances of Grotowski and the Teatr Laboratorium. Rather more, there is something like in Hieronymus Bosch's paintings – a narrow channel with some light at the end of it.

Kolankiewicz: We have this image in front of our eyes – *The Ascent of the Blessed*: a narrowing spiral tunnel with a light where the souls fly away.

Flaszen: The initiatory experience. You can, as an anthropologist, say what this experience is in primeval cultures – these are cruel things. By the way, Grotowski was very interested in this. He told me once that he went near the Himalayan Mountains or the Gobi Desert and he witnessed dead bodies left on a field being pecked and eaten by birds. And a young Buddhist monk was to hold a vigil at night among these decomposing corpses and their guts, and was to meditate alone; he was to pass alone through such an experience. This is the experience of death, the so-called initiatory death. Grotowski said he saw it. It was during one of our first meetings when we discussed the shape of our future theatre, in May 1959. I read about it in Alexandra David-Neel's book *Magic and Mystery in Tibet*.[63] Not long afterwards, the Teatr Laboratorium performances became these kinds of initiatory experiences that work through shock, through transgression, and through terror. You need to experience dread. This is like the dark night associated with St. John of the Cross. All mystics know this, including those Christian mystics.

Somebody from the audience: Does this apply to Mickiewicz's *Zdania i uwagi* (Statements and Remarks) as well?

Flaszen: Of course, they were using spiritual pressure in this circle [the Circle of God's Work]. And it is not known whether master Andrzej [Towiański] was a typical sadist or whether he provoked such abrupt reactions in people and so they had to accept them as an experience on the spiritual journey.

Kolankiewicz: It had the nature of an initiatory experience because it was connected with the renunciation of oneself in the form in which this self exists, both *for* the world and *in* the world – it was connected with humbling or self-humbling.

Flaszen: Self-humbling, *kenosis*.

Kolankiewicz: Exactly, *heautón ekénosen* – he stripped himself of everything, literally: he made himself empty – the bare Christ, humbled and therefore following him in a humble way as in the Orthodox *jurodztwo* (foolishness for Christ, holy idiocy) and what you called *via negativa*, which denotes by means of a negative way to God, through denial: this isn't it, this isn't it still, and still this isn't it.[64]

Flaszen: *Imitatio Christi*, the imitation of the passion, the carrying of the cross. The carrying of the cross is an initiatory experience – this is how it can be interpreted. And I believe that this is how great mystics interpreted it, and how stigmatics did – those who suffered enormously and were happy because of these sufferings – because they believed that this would lead them to see God face-to-face. And what transpires is – as you wrote – *metánoia*.[65] St. John of the

towski & Company, pp. 124-27.

[63] This book was first published in Poland in 1938 as *Mistycy i cudotwórcy Tybetu* (Tibet's Mystics and Miracle-workers). Eds.

[64] The phrase *heautón ekénosen* comes from Philippians 2.7.

[65] See Leszek Kolankiewicz, 'L'art de comédien selon Grotowski' / 'Acting according to Grotowski', *Le Théâtre en Pologne* / *The Theatre in Poland*, 3 (1994), 14-18.

Cross called it *transformación*: a transformation. This is simply an act of new birth. In order to fulfil oneself, one needs to be born again. This is somehow connected to [G. I.] Gurdijeff, and so on.

Kolankiewicz: How does it appear in Mickiewicz's *Zdania i uwagi*? 'You believe that God was born in Bethlehem | but woe betide you, if he has not been born in you'.[66]

Flaszen: Yes, the Inner Christ. *The Way of the Cross* is like the *via negativa* in mysticism. As regards Grotowski, I have this hypothesis that he didn't feel good in his own body. He searched for a new incarnation. He was almost aware of it. He needed a partner for this transformation, to get to this incarnation through an alter ego. Ryszard Cieślak was that partner. Grotowski said that there was Eros and Caritas in it, that it was a new birth. We could say that this statement is not without the risk of honesty, but also of a conceit. That is what I would say as *advocatus diaboli* (devil's advocate). This is the role Grotowski assigned me – to be *advocatus diaboli*.

Kolankiewicz: This is what always happens with mysticism. The dialectics of mysticism – there is a stripping away and a resignation, the renunciation of everything; and, on the other hand, there is the accomplishment of wholeness. And because of this accomplishment, there is the danger of a conceit.

Flaszen: Yes, this is a never-ending process, it is almost a self-propelling process. Grotowski wanted to incarnate himself anew; he wanted to be born again. This comes from Hinduism, but is also Christian. And what is theatre in this ontological and biological undertaking, what is it in this forcing its way towards the impossible? An insignificant game. You're right: *metánoia*. I think this has to do with transferral into a different dimension; it has to do with a change of perception of the world. *La vida es sueño*. Reality is a dream.[67] And, indeed, the silence in the audience after Grotowski's performances demonstrates this well. In the silence following *Akropolis*, *The Constant Prince*, and *Apocalypsis cum Figuris*, both the actors and we are like phantoms. We do not know what kind of material we are made of.[68] It is like air vibrating with silence. Or it is, as in Słowacki's work, that we hear the sounds from an invisible harp, suspended in the air. Or like this [phrase], 'a ringing reached me' [*dźwięk mnie doleciał*].

Kolankiewicz: You mean 'a ringing roused me' [*dźwięk mnie uderzył*] – as in Mickiewicz's [poem] 'A Vision' [*Widzenie*].[69]

Flaszen: That is the experience and it happened in this room.[70] When I participated in this, or when I was a witness, I always used to have the impression that I was dreaming. This also happened during *Tree of People* [*Drzewo ludzi*] – an hours-long paratheatrical experience in which I had the opportunity to be part of the group leading the work session. It was a different type of listening. Sound. The silence of the heart. Everything fell silent. But sounds existed. We opened the window in the early morning and we could hear the sounds of the city, the awakening city. It sounded like a harmony. A cosmic harmony. It was beautiful. But now I wonder whether this life is a dream? Is this *maya*? One that is provoked. Is this *maya* or the cosmic illusion provoked by a certain ritual, or is this the Real? Forgive me. 'Performer'.[71] We were going to talk about something…

Kolankiewicz: No, no, it's fine. We're talking about the right thing, indeed. You said

[66] In Polish: 'Wierzysz, że Bóg się zrodził w betlejemskim żłobie, | lecz biada ci, jeżeli nie zrodził się w tobie'.

[67] Flaszen is referring to Pedro Calderón de la Barca's play of 1635-1636, *Life is a Dream*. Trans.

[68] Flaszen is referring to Prospero's monologue from Shakespeare's *The Tempest* (published 1610-1611). Eds.

[69] 'A Vision' is a mystical poem by Adam Mickiewicz written around 1835 and first published in 1861 (after the poet's death); see Mickiewicz, 'A Vision', trans. by Dorothea Prall Radin, *The Slavonic and East European Review*, 17.49 (1938), 17-19. Kolankiewicz claims that this was Grotowski's favourite poem of Mickiewicz's output – see Leszek Kolankiewicz, 'Grotowski w poszukiwaniu esencji' (Grotowski in Search of the Essence), in his *Wielki mały wóz* (The Little Big Dipper) (Gdańsk: słowo/obraz terytoria, 2001), pp. 249-339 (p. 325). Eds.

[70] The interview took place in what is called the 'Apocalypsis' room at the Grotowski Institute, where this performance was created and used to be presented. Eds.

[71] Flaszen is referring to Grotowski's text, 'Performer', in *The Grotowski Sourcebook*, pp. 376-80. Eds.

maya. We obviously recognise this Sanskrit term signifying a great cosmic illusion. But *maya* is also an artistic illusion. In this case, a demiurge acts as a great artist, as an exemplar for the artist. But there is absolutely no need for Hindu concepts, as you said: *La vida es sueño* – words from Calderón. This means that life is a dream, from which we wake up, from which we are able to wake up; this also means that the whole created world is like a dream. Or is it like Shakespeare who talks in *The Tempest* about the 'baseless fabric of this vision', about the 'insubstantial pageant'. This can be a sensation, simply a sensation, when after very intensive work you open a window in the morning and hear the sound of the world. We do not need Sanskrit terms for that.

Flaszen: And also there is no need for great masters for that.

Kolankiewicz: You talk about the silence of the heart. Is there, in this silence, space for a word? This is an important question. If we remember the prologue of the Gospel according to St. John, where it is said 'En arché én ho logos', 'In principio erat verbum' – 'In the beginning was the Word'.[72] Is this word the silence of the heart? In the birth of a new person – is there a word there?

Flaszen: I have a great dilemma, because it seems to me that there both is and isn't. These things are known from esotericism, and also from the Gospel according to St. John, which says that 'the word became flesh'. What does it mean that 'In the beginning was the Word'; the sound? It means that the sound, the voice created the world. A vibration created it. And what is the word? The word is a vibration. This kind of vibrating word can achieve a curious quality, which is conducive to a transformation. And this vibrates materially. The 'word-vibration' touches us wholly, as Grotowski would say. I think that the word stimulates the experience. This goes against what Grotowski often used to say: that it is not a discourse, not a word… He said that you reach verbal formulae *a posteriori* – after the experience. There are 'words/energies', 'words/keys'. Grotowski called it intentional language and he used it in work with the actors. This language may be incomprehensible to others, but it stimulates activity. And this is action with words. Action with words: an image, a sound, visual associations, gestural associations, a reaction, or a glance. But also the word which is at the beginning. You're right to push me for this *word*. However, I am not so crazy as to judge or not judge anything in this regard, do you hear? I can hear a bard's harp ringing in the air. That of Gombrowicz. But I am the author of a text which is called 'The Book' [*Księga*].[73]

Kolankiewicz: That's right!

Flaszen: I'm a man of letters – a traitor.

Kolankiewicz: Does this somehow touch your guilty conscience?

Flaszen: Very much so. I sinned. But I'm not sure whether I feel great repentance. I need to work on myself to be able to experience it fully. But where am I going with that? I want to say that manifestos appear in the hunch of a specific practice. Sometimes they appear after, sometimes before, but they contain a response. This is similar to the Theatre of Cruelty or the *V-effekt* (alienation/distancing effect). These are words that open something up. *Via negativa* – this opens something up. Poor theatre – this also opens something up. In my opinion, the things that will remain after Grotowski, over many centuries – apart from those faded film testimonies – are these few words, which are no longer comprehensible but which sound enigmatic.

I want to add something with regards to the text, 'Performer', while we are in a murky and sinful domain. There is the possibility of a misdemeanour against reason, and also various kinds of sect-like, religious, and metaphysical abuses. Spiritual immodesties. And most of all, a fundamental mistake, so to say, a 'cosmic' mistake, which can wrongly influence the whole matter. There

[72] John 1.1.

[73] See Flaszen, 'The Book', trans. by Duncan Jamieson and Adela Karsznia, in *Grotowski & Company*, pp. 131-34. Eds.

are two birds, one who picks and the other who looks on.[74] This is a curious 'self', a doubled 'self'. Let us look at the evolution. Long ago, master Grotowski spoke of a handicapped, multiplied, and divided 'self'; the crucial act was to connect them all in one, global, ecstatic 'self', which was simultaneously spiritual and corporeal. Grotowski spoke about this beautifully here from the film screen the day before yesterday.[75] And in 'Performer', in Grotowski's last creative journey, twoness appeared, twoness instead of oneness. A human being who has at their disposal *the doing*. There is the doing and there is an eye that looks on. An eye that is difficult to define. This is some kind of an authority in us, but at the same time it is an objective being – as I understand it. This is a type of looking glass that observes the entirety of what we perceive. Everything flows and the only constant thing is this looking glass. This 'self' that looks on is probably eternal.

Two birds. I think that during the period of our actual *kali yuga*, these two birds picked at each other instead of coexisting in harmony. Perhaps they still do so. Let's end here: two birds that pick at each other – this will make a good ending.

Kolankiewicz: Ludwik, on behalf of all of us here, I would like to thank you for this wonderful 'meditation aloud'.[76] I must say that this was a wonderful spiritual feast. I feel like that bird who picks, I feel fed and satiated by your words today.

Flaszen: Thank you very much, Leszek. I would like to thank the hosts of this space for the invitation. I feel at home here, although I am only a guest. Because this earth is only...

Kolankiewicz: ...an inn on this great journey.

Flaszen: An inn on this great journey.[77]

TRANSLATED BY JUSTYNA DROBNIK-ROGERS

---

[74] See Grotowski, 'Performer', *passim*.

[75] Two filmed interviews with Jerzy Grotowski that were recorded for American television by Margaret Croyden (with simultaneous and live interpretation from French into English by Jacques Chwat), were presented on the eighth anniversary of Jerzy Grotowski's death on 14 January 2007 at the Grotowski Institute in Wrocław: *Jerzy Grotowski with Margaret Croyden*, dir. by Merrill Brockway (Creative Arts Television, 1969) and a document from the series 'Conversations about theatre, part 1', *Jerzy Grotowski*, dir. by Merrill Brockway (Camera Theatre, 1973). Flaszen is referring to the first of these films. Eds.

[76] See Flaszen, 'Meditations Aloud' in *Grotowski & Company*, pp. 135-50.

[77] Flaszen and Kolankiewicz are quoting from the Polish version of *The Constant Prince* prepared by Juliusz Słowacki, after Calderón. (Flaszen: 'Bo ta ziemia to...; Kolankiewicz: '...gospoda w ogromnej naszej podróży'; Flaszen: '...gospoda w ogromnej naszej podróży'). See *Książę Niezłomny*, II, verses 540-41. Trans.

Grotowski Gave Us a Chance

ANDRZEJ BIELSKI TALKS TO TERESA BŁAJET-WILNIEWCZYC

ANDRZEJ BIELSKI (1934–1996) joined the Teatr Laboratorium in 1960 and left the group soon after the theatre moved from Opole to Wrocław in 1965. He appeared in each of the Laboratorium productions during this period, from *Cain* (1960) to *Studium o Hamlecie* (Hamlet Study, 1964). During the 1953/54 season he had performed at the Teatr Domu Wojska Polskiego in Warsaw and from 1954-1957 he was an actor at the Warsaw Estrada, a popular entertainment theatre. During the 1959/60 season he worked in puppetry at the Teatr Ziemi Opolskiej in Opole. In 1965 he joined the Teatr Rozmaitości (the Teatr Współczesny from 1967) in Wrocław, where he continued to work until his death. He has also appeared in many Polish films.

This conversation was held in Wrocław in May 1994, and was originally published as 'Grotowski dał nam szansę', *Notatnik Teatralny*, 10 (1995), 70-83; a special issue devoted to Ryszard Cieślak.

Teresa Błajet-Wilniewczyc: You were an actor in Opole's Teatr 13 Rzędów (Theatre of the 13 Rows) from when it began in 1959.[1] You came to Wrocław with this company and participated in the rehearsals for *The Constant Prince*. Later, you left Jerzy Grotowski and you went on to be an actor at the Teatr Współczesny (Contemporary Theatre) in Wrocław for thirty years.[2] Would you now like to tell us about that time and that theatre from the perspective of the many years of your various creative experiences? Firstly though, how did you meet Jerzy Grotowski?

Andrzej Bielski: As always in life, coincidence dictated our meeting. In 1959 I decided to leave Warsaw. I worked then at the Teatr Domu Wojska Polskiego (Polish Army Theatre House) as an apprentice. There were three employed at any one time in the theatre: Konrad Swinarski,[3] Jerzy Turek,[4] and myself. Due to my personal situation – I had to support my ill mother – I couldn't even dream of completing drama school. I knew that it was going to be very difficult in Warsaw, so I decided to go to Opole. There I got a position at the Teatr Lalek (Puppet Theatre), where I took part in two premieres. At the same time, the Teatr 13 Rzędów was being created.[5] Since I had known Grotowski beforehand, I made friends with the company. Shortly afterwards, I got the opportunity to move to the Teatr 13 Rzędów. Straightaway I had to perform in *Orpheus* and in *Cain*, as an understudy for Stanisław

[1] In fact, Bielski joined the company on 1 May 1960. Eds.

[2] The official name of this theatre is the Wrocławski Teatr Współczesny im. Edmunda Wiercińskiego. Trans.

[3] Konrad Swinarski (1929-1975) was a director and scenographer, one of the most outstanding Polish theatre artists of the twentieth century. He trained with Bertolt Brecht at the Berliner Ensemble. Swinarski is best known for his adaptations of Shakespeare and of Polish classics from the Romantic period (Adam Mickiewicz, Zygmunt Krasiński). He has influenced the work of many Polish directors, such as Krystian Lupa, Jerzy Jarocki, and Jerzy Grzegorzewski. Trans.

[4] Jerzy Turek (1934-2010) was a well-known Polish film, television, and theatre actor who has collaborated with various theatres such as the Teatr Narodowy (National Theatre) and the Teatr Rozmaitości in Warsaw (Variety Theatre, currently known as TR Warszawa). Trans.

[5] The Teatr 13 Rzędów was founded by the couple Stanisława Łopuszańska-Ławska and Eugeniusz Ławski, actors from the Państwowy Teatr Ziemi Opolskiej (State Theatre of the Opole Region). It opened officially on 16 May 1958 with *Freuda teoria snów* (Freud's Dream Theory) by Antoni Cwojdziński. Soon after, Łopuszańska invited Grotowski to direct Jerzy Krzysztoń's play *Pechowcy* (The Ill-Fated). The performance premiered on 8 November 1958. In 1959, Jerzy Grotowski took over the theatre. See p. 13, n. 13 for further details. Eds.

Andrzej Bielski (left), Ryszard Cieślak, and Zbigniew Cynkutis in Słowacki's *Kordian* (1962).
Photograph: Ryszard Okoński.

Szreniawski.[6] So I stayed in the company. This year [1994] I'll celebrate my thirty-fifth anniversary of being in theatre.

What was Jerzy Grotowski's theatre like in those days? The artistic premise of this theatre was, among other things, a rebellion against theatre rooted in the nineteenth-century tradition – but it was also against programmatic schematism, which proclaimed that art was to play a political rather than an artistic role.[7] We therefore began from an opposition to what we found. In any case, we certainly didn't think about making a so-called 'acting career' out of it. None of us thought about our profession in such terms.

The important premise in our work was also the fact that the performance was to be the summation and result of a long period of exercises and études. This was the case for perhaps all of the productions except *Cain* and *Orpheus*, which were still close to the conventions of the old theatre – [for them] we had analytical rehearsals, read the text, and then circumstances-based rehearsals followed. Yet you could already notice a certain kind of poetics in this work, as well as a system of montage.

The long period of exercises and rehearsals had great value. It was a versatile way of getting to know yourself and your abilities, and of recognising mutual relationships in situations where common and schematic behaviour and reactions were rejected. This work headed towards ever-deeper self-recognition and self-exposure; it was something new that didn't exist, and still doesn't exist in conventional theatre. In general, it is commonly assumed that the actor comes to the theatre and is ready to work: they are cast in a role, they analyse it, and after a defined period of time, they need to be ready. Such thinking didn't exist in our company. On the contrary! We assumed *a priori* that none of us was ready for specific work. There was a kind of trampoline from which you had to jump, but you had to search how to make this leap. Each performance leaned towards new artistic, aesthetic, and technical principles, and we needed to go a very long way to achieve this; it was impossible to define it within any given timeframe.

So we searched. Mostly within ourselves. Grotowski told us that the work on character should be like peeling an onion. In the ordinary theatre, more often than not, after peeling off the first brown layer, the role is thought to be ready. In our theatre, this small core at the very middle of the onion constituted the essence of the role. This included everything: our experiences, our imagination, our complexes, and our nervous systems.

Błajet-Wilniewczyc: It was a kind of very personal confession and, in later performances, it almost took the form of a sacrifice made before the spectator, or, perhaps, on behalf of the spectator. It was the sacrifice of the privacy and intimacy you discovered; it wasn't a mask worn in everyday life. This must have cost you, it must have hurt.

Bielski: I think that at its core, acting is based on enormous pain. This is true when an actor has enough personal courage to draw on their own complexes, as in every other form of art. In such an instance, it will never be said that acting is 'reproducing'. In the Teatr 13 Rzędów, we removed, as you do with theatre masks, the conventional gestures and behaviour of everyday life; we searched for our own, non-superficial truth.

Błajet-Wilniewczyc: This rejection of half-measures, which was so total in *The Constant Prince,* was something like a kind of ritual confession, a public confession in front of witnesses. It wasn't about making a literary character come alive through daily behaviour, but on the contrary – this brave and creative act by the actor-human was to engender a live and direct confrontation and integration with the spectator-human. What then for you was the dramatic text?

Bielski: It played the role of a score that organised the theatre's means; sometimes it

[6] Szreniawski, a Kraków drama school graduate, was a member of the company during its first season, from autumn 1959 to 1 July 1960. Eds.

[7] Bielski is probably referring to a typically Socialist Realist, schematic approach to the arts, still prevalent in the 1960s. Eds.

was a harness for the form, a trampoline, and sometimes a pretext for personal searching. It wasn't about interpreting the text, but about showing our own understanding and perception of the world. I had to search for my answers alone; I couldn't reach for anything ready-made. This work required exercises that lasted more or less the same amount of time that we spent in rehearsals.

Błajet-Wilniewczyc: The practically unlimited time that you had for this incisive searching was a great comfort. How was such a thing possible during the period of planned cultural politics and arbitrary state patronage?

Bielski: Indeed, we weren't strictly controlled in terms of deadlines and the number of our premieres. Our theatre was not an autonomous institution with obligations regarding a certain kind of financial planning, repertoire, audience numbers, etc. We existed as part of the Stowarzyszenie Związków Twórczych (Association of Creative Unions), and so we could work differently from other theatres, where a premiere had to take place at a given time, regardless of whether or not the roles were ready. Our way of creating a performance was completely different. Besides, during work we never thought about anything like a theatrical effect or about performing something using an image or a trick. On the contrary, we shunned what might be considered 'theatrical effect'.

Błajet-Wilniewczyc: How did you conceive of the work then? Was it creating a new aesthetics, a new theatrical language, a possibility for self-discovery, self-analysis? Or perhaps even then you saw it as an opportunity to encounter a sensitive and searching spectator, another human being?

Bielski: All these things were important. I had the impression that we were doing something new, interesting. And we didn't use the term 'avant-garde' at all. We were very careful not to equate 'modern' with 'innovative'.

We tried to be very modest then. In Opole, we managed to pursue this modesty to its utmost. Such modesty pertained even to citing Grot [Grotowski] and his way of working in our later practice; it also had to do with creating legends. To use an anecdote: I have been in the so-called 'normal' theatre for thirty years and during this time I've met about 150 people who were at [Juliusz] Osterwa's death bed.[8] The same applies to the period of Teatr 13 Rzędów in Opole. There are so many witnesses and theorists of Grotowski's theatre! Those people do so much damage... I don't consciously want to participate in this, but I don't want to engage in fighting it either.

There are hundreds of Grotowski's 'pupils'. The strange language that is used in spoken and written reflection about this theatre offends me too. It sounds odd to me. It seems to be pseudo-academic. Our work appears to be a dehumanised process, and it sounds as if at that time in Opole we were so inspired and knew straightaway what to do and how.

Błajet-Wilniewczyc: But you must have had the feeling of creating something extraordinary in those days.

Bielski: You need to see our work in the context of the time, the age in which we lived. Every young, intelligent person dreamt about creative or professional fulfilment in those days – it was about 'being' not 'having'. We worked, convinced that this was needed. We wanted to do something in life, not to make a career, but to do something honest, true, and also to be actors – it really was the right way. Such an approach seems inconceivable to students in drama schools today. They are pursued by time, and this time and everything that exists externally is important for them; they are not concerned about themselves. They are so lost.

In Opole we weren't touched by what you call a career or success. Our journey into the world, and the relishing of this world – later on all this constituted some kind of obstacle. We arrived in Wrocław after being kicked out

[8] Juliusz Osterwa (1885-1947) was an actor, director and reformer of the theatre. Together with Mieczysław Limanowski he founded the Reduta in 1919, which was the first Polish laboratory theatre based on radical theories concerning acting, directing, and methods of training. Grotowski based his ideas on the tradition of the Reduta, and adapted its symbol (the sign for infinity) as the symbol of his theatre. Trans.

of Opole. At the station we got off the train and saw some ladies with flowers. We were convinced that there must be some kind of football team on the same train and we modestly waited for somebody else to receive the flowers. It didn't cross our minds that *we* were the ones being greeted in this way. We also didn't think about issues such as 'how much?' and 'what will I get out of it?'

Błajet-Wilniewczyc: Who was Jerzy Grotowski for you then?

Bielski: To be honest, in those days I was fascinated by Grotowski, one hundred percent. He was very close to me, as a person. And our collective work was based on these layers of feelings. Everyone felt that way; otherwise it would have been difficult to imagine such intense moments of utterly unusual openness during rehearsals. This was possible thanks to the fact that we were so close to each other and that we trusted each other a great deal. This isn't possible in the official theatre. Even today, despite the fact that Grotowski and I rarely meet, almost never, he is still close to me. It was important for me that a few weeks ago, on the day I had surgery, I received a very personal telegram from him.

We did not go to work as you do in every other theatre. Let me tell you something special; I think it was before the premiere of *Akropolis*. We each already had girlfriends or wives; we were growing up gradually, in the same way that the theatre itself developed. One day, Grotowski came to rehearsal and said that because we were about to enter into a very intensive period of work, he was asking each of us to cease intimate relations with our wives or girlfriends. And we accepted this request without any discussion or ambiguity. Besides, he was right. Those last two weeks required such total effort and concentration that there was no space for anything else. When, a while ago, I told my students about this, they started laughing wildly and asked: what right did he have to demand such things?!

And this is proof that there was no sphere of our life about which we couldn't talk to each other. We had a kind of mutual trust that everything would be received with seriousness, and later it turned out that this was quite correct. This included our wives too. This anecdote shows extremely clearly, almost implicitly, what happened within our group.

Błajet-Wilniewczyc: You said earlier that your existence in Opole was not 'off-' as it is often described today, but 'off-off'. Did your avant-garde status come with any kind of courage or risk?

Bielski: There is this unjustified theory about the fate that hung over the group, about self-destruction. Nobody forced us to do anything. We dealt our cards openly. Grotowski offered us a particular system, a regime of work and a very serious type of approach to this; his demands increased continually. Those who couldn't endure it simply left. For instance, Staszek [Stanisław] Szreniawski, Tadek [Tadeusz] Bartkowiak, Adam Kurczyna, Maciek [Maciej] Prus,[9] Alek [Aleksander] Kopczewski, Maja Komorowska, and Zbyszek [Zbigniew] Cynkutis or Zygmunt Molik who left for some years.[10] Actors either rebelled or couldn't stay with this work. Some left, others came, and the group evolved. In the first [Opole] phase from the beginning to the end, there were only four or five of us who lasted out.

As I said, Grotowski offered a certain poetics of the theatre, with which you either agreed or disagreed, and a defined system of work to develop your craft and character. He gave us a chance and everyone, according to their abilities, made use of it: one became Rysiek

[9] Maciej Prus (b. 1937) is a well-recognised repertory theatre director in Poland. Eds.

[10] Tadeusz Bartkowiak was an actor in the Teatr 13 Rzędów from 1 September 1959 to 1 October 1960; Adam Kurczyna – from 1 September 1959 to the end of summer 1961; Maciej Prus – for the 1962/63 season; Aleksander Kopczewski – from 1 October 1961 to 14 February 1962. Maja Komorowska joined the company on 1 October 1961 and left on 1 November 1962. Then she returned on 1 September 1964 and left at the beginning of 1968. Zbigniew Cynkutis joined the company on 1 June 1961 and left on 31 December 1963, then he joined again in December 1966. Zygmunt Molik was in the company from its beginning on 1 September 1959, leaving between 1 September 1965 and 1 March 1967, when he re-joined the group and remained until its dissolution in 1984. Eds.

Ryszard Cieślak, Andrzej Bielski, and Antoni Jahołkowski in the second version of Wyspański's *Akropolis* (1963). Photographer unknown.

[Ryszard] Cieślak, another – Andrzej Bielski. Also, Grotowski tried to equip each of us for when we left the group.

But does anyone talk now about Molik's, Jahołkowski's, Mirecka's or Cieślak's theatre? No, everyone talks about Grotowski's theatre. Just as they talk about Jarocki's[11] theatre, Grzegorzewski's,[12] Piscator's, Schiller's[13] or Krasowski's theatres.[14] That's how

[11] Jerzy Jarocki (1929-2012) was one of the best-known Polish theatre directors of the post-war era. He is especially famous for his performances of Polish contemporary drama (e.g. the plays of Tadeusz Różewicz, Sławomir Mrożek, and Stanisław Ignacy Witkiewicz). Jarocki was also a pedagogue who taught directing at the drama school in Kraków. Trans.

[12] Jerzy Grzegorzewski (1939-2005) was a well-known Polish director and scenographer, as well as artistic director of repertory theatres such as the Teatr Polski (Polish Theatre) in Wrocław (1978-1981), the Teatr Studio (1982-1997) and the Teatr Narodowy (National Theatre, 1997-2003) in Warsaw. Grzegorzewski was acclaimed for mixing tradition with experiment, writing his own scripts based on classical dramas and returning to the same themes and authors to reinterpret and deconstruct cultural myths. Trans.

[13] For further information on Schiller see elsewhere in this volume, p. 25, n. 38.

[14] Jerzy Krasowski (1925-2008) and his wife Krystyna Skuszanka (1924-2011) were directors of various

it is. As a matter of fact, theatre is the last place where justice still exists.

Błajet-Wilniewczyc: Let's go back to my question: didn't you defend yourself against Grotowski's method of work, didn't you have any concerns? Grotowski inspired your creative abilities with stimuli to which you had to react honestly, totally and with no possibility of 'hiding' behind the scenography, music, or technical effects.

Bielski: Of course I had such concerns! Naturally. Everyone defends themselves against being exposed. Nonetheless, I always trusted Grotowski. He was loyal and our secrets remained our own. And this applied to the whole group. In silence we respected our pains and weaknesses, which later on would become the building blocks of the characters and the performance.

Błajet-Wilniewczyc: You also worked on *The Constant Prince*. What was your impression of what you saw at a certain stage, this collective creation by Cieślak and Grotowski?

Bielski: We had separate rehearsals; we only came together at the end. What impression did Rysiek make on me? I have to say that I was completely dumbstruck, I was lost and I didn't know what to perform. He went so far in what he had done; they both went so far.

At the beginning in Opole, from an intellectual point of view, in the sense of erudition and awareness of craft, of professionalism, whatever you want to call it, the group was at, let's say, level A, while Grotowski was at [the next] level B. Gradually, as time passed, the group developed greatly, including intellectually. But, by way of comparison, we developed according to an arithmetic progression, while Grotowski's development was geometric. Eventually, after some years, he broke away from the pack and the group started to be a ball and chain for him. It turned out that everything that could have been done in the theatre field had been done; he searched in different areas, on a different level of thinking.

Błajet-Wilniewczyc: You left the theatre then [in early 1965]. Why?

Bielski: There were two reasons. One was personal: I had two children and my wife had become unemployed. In that situation I couldn't devote myself fully only to this theatre. My family needed me. And the second reason? I had a great need to protect my intimacy, my autonomy. Ryszard Cieślak was like my opposite; his bottom line, in terms of protecting himself, was set close to zero. I was mainly interested in the theatre; the paratheatrical activities didn't appeal to me at all. I never hid this from Grotowski. In fact, he was the one who told me one day: go to the theatre. I made this decision and I found a job at the Teatr Współczesny in Wrocław, which in those days was called the Rozmaitości (Variety Theatre). I did some performances there and I was even advised to take an extra-curricular exam in directing.

I split with Grotowski with great respect; we are still close to each other. We never hid from each other that we were different. Paratheatre was completely alien to me.

Błajet-Wilniewczyc: But you would probably admit, wouldn't you, that everything had to go that way, that it was always heading in that direction? Thanks to the actors' and spectators' shared theatre space, thanks to a specific, shocking, blasphemous, but also very personal approach to character and to acting, the spectator was always placed in the position of a participant, or at least in the position of being something more. The spectator, the specific being, was to find themselves and go through a journey similar to that of the actor.

In this theatre, where the border between art and life is blurred, the spectator-human was provoked and intended to meet the actor-human in an almost direct way. In paratheatre, this collective stream of emotions was intensified. The contact between all those who took part in the meeting became totally direct.

repertory theatres, most notably of the Teatr Ludowy (People's Theatre) in Nowa Huta which they led from 1955 to 1963. In collaboration with Józef Szajna, the Krasowskis created an ambitious realistic theatre with explicit political and social messages. Trans.

This was important also for the leaders of these meetings, for the actors. When asked in an interview why he left the theatre, Ryszard Cieślak replied that despite the closeness to the spectators and sharing himself with them, he wanted to receive a more evident response from them. In the paratheatrical work he could at last, directly and mutually, share himself with people. 'I suddenly discovered that people can give me so much… that they had such a rich cosmos in themselves and that sharing this with them was unbelievable. It was not based on meeting people who sat around and looked at you – it was a sharing between people.' In this way, gradually – firstly, through performance and later through paratheatre – the elimination of the alienation and separation between the actor and the spectator in the theatre was achieved. And it wasn't just about the theatre!

Bielski: Of course. This work went along with its own epoch, it reacted to those times. It followed life. It was the 1960s and the beginning of the 1970s. The youth rebellions and the widespread counterculture imposed a uniformity of thinking, customs, fashion and clothing – you were obliged to listen to the same music and wear jeans, and so on. Grotowski wanted to test out the mass superficiality of this rebellion and get beneath its skin into its more profound and more individual current. A certain philosophy of contestation was close to him, but it wasn't as a manifestation of uniformity.

Błajet-Wilniewczyc: The same with existentialism, but also with the sleepy 'small stabilisation' of the 1960s.[15] He always offered something individual – he provoked, he replenished and balanced. And he was always interested in the individual human, individual existence and its quality.

In about 1969 Grotowski ultimately crossed the borders of theatre and rejected its last conventions. Gradually removing the subsequent barriers, one after another, he headed in his search towards more and more simple human relationships. And, or so it seems, this kind of journey is endless.

Mr Bielski, you also began a journey into a different and, for you, new world. You listened to Grotowski and… you went to the theatre!

Bielski: Now, with the hindsight of years – when I have become old and perhaps a bit wiser, which I doubt – I cannot say whether or not this was a good decision. I hope so.

In the 1970s, I performed with Zdzisław Kuźniar[16] in *Zielone rękawice* (Green Gloves)[17] at one of the festivals, in Kalisz, I think. Grotowski was a member of the jury. After the piece, he came up to me and said completely seriously and cordially: you represent our company very well. I think I found a place for myself in the theatre.

Błajet-Wilniewczyc: But it must have been different.

Bielski: There are various kinds of posturing in the normal theatre. For instance, an actor cannot confess during rehearsals that things are not going well for them, that they've had to do a lot of work. The expected attitude is: I came, I performed. And then: I went to the green room and laughed it off. It's cool to be laid-back: I'm so talented, I come and perform and everything is all right. I've tried to fight against this buffoonery. I've tried to demonstrate to my colleagues so-called work, reliability, precision. I've always treated them very seriously. One day, I said to them: I treat you seriously, because I treat myself seriously. This was accepted and my colleagues used to like working with me when I took on an assistant director position, which was very often. They got to like my precision in organising our work.

---

[15] A period of disillusionment commonly called the 'small stabilisation' ended in 1970 when Władysław Gomułka, the head of state, was deposed. The phrase is taken from Tadeusz Różewicz's play *Świadkowie, czyli nasza mała stabilizacja* (The Witnesses, or Our Small Stabilisation), published in 1962. Trans.

[16] Zdzisław Kuźniar (b. 1931) is a film and theatre actor. He was employed from 1961 to 1996 at the Teatr Rozmaitości, which in 1967 was renamed the Wrocławski Teatr Współczesny. Trans.

[17] *A* play by Tymoteusz Karpowicz, which opened on 19 February 1967 at the then Teatr Rozmaitości. Trans.

At the Teatr Współczesny I've struggled to work during recent years, but it was great earlier on when I worked with Andrzej Witkowski,[18] Jerzy Jarocki, Kazimierz Braun,[19] or Helmut Kajzar.[20] I performed in all of Helmut's performances. He was a chip off the same old theatre block as Grotowski. The poetics of Kajzar's theatre were different, but the method of approaching a character was similar. […]

I never had a complex about being one of Grotowski's actors and I also never made use of the fact that I was from the Teatr 13 Rzędów; Grotowski appreciated that. I think it was good that I found a place for myself within the theatre. I did what was expected of me and I performed what was to be performed. [Aleksander] Zelwerowicz[21] once said that all your life you can play the main parts and not once be a creator, but you can be a bit-part kind of person and be a theatre artist.

When Grotowski left the theatre, he finished working with his actors. Each of us, though, could take something from that experience and transfer it into our future life. Rena Mirecka and Zygmunt Molik run their own work sessions the whole world over. Maja Komorowska, Mietek [Mieczysław] Janowski, and I remained as actors. And unfortunately, there are many others we can only remember today. […]

Błajet-Wilniewczyc: Jerzy Grotowski didn't want a socialite-spectator who comes to the theatre to relax. He wanted a spectator-witness, a participant, a spectator who asks fundamental questions, somebody who debates. By calling on the similarities between people and by accepting people – 'be who you are, wholly' – Grotowski wanted to transcend the half-measures of the actor-spectator relationship. The performance was to be an integrating encounter-therapy. How honest, do you think, were the Teatr Laboratorium's spectators in their often demonstrative reactions? How much did they really make use of this beautiful idea of therapy through the theatre?

Bielski: I think that the spectators' spontaneous reactions were honest. The spectators also felt the necessity to take off masks and shields. In those days, there was in the world, but also in socialist countries, a need for the theatre, which could be an answer to some kind of longing. Life and art are like connected vessels. Grotowski didn't invent this, but he was able to recognise it well.

Błajet-Wilniewczyc: Professor Zbigniew Osiński calls Grotowski someone who diagnoses contemporary culture and civilisation.[22]

Bielski: Because Grotowski has always had a wonderful eye for reality. Woodstock, [Allen] Ginsberg's poetry, the counterculture activity – all this constituted an expression of rebellion and a need to break existing patterns. Grotowski met these same needs; he balanced and verified them. […]

Błajet-Wilniewczyc: We would like to know and believe that the work of Grotowski's theatre has endured, despite its ephemerality. Theatre critics have many times searched for traces of the Teatr Laboratorium in contemporary Polish theatre. It needs to be said that they haven't been very successful, especially since the aesthetics are often confused with technique. You, however, as a practitioner who has worked in both theatres, must be able to see some of Grotowski's influences on Polish theatre art.

---

[18] Andrzej Witkowski (1924–1977) was an actor, director and later artistic manager of the Wrocławski Teatr Współczesny (1966–1973). Trans.

[19] Kazimierz Braun (b. 1936) is a director, theatre historian and university professor (currently at Buffalo University in the United States). He was artistic director of the Wrocławski Teatr Współczesny from 1975 to 1984, when he was dismissed from this position due to his political views which were against the communist authorities. He then emigrated to the United States. Trans.

[20] Helmut Kajzar (1941–1982) was a playwright, theatre director, and theorist, known for his adaptations of Tadeusz Różewicz's plays. Trans.

[21] Aleksander Zelwerowicz (1877–1955) was an actor, director, theatre manager, teacher, and patron of the Theatre Academy in Warsaw. Trans.

[22] Zbigniew Osiński (b. 1939) is one of the most prolific Polish scholars of Grotowski's work. He is the author of numerous books on Grotowski and the initiator and first director of the Grotowski Centre, renamed the Grotowski Institute in 2006. Trans.

Bielski: Please look at [Jerzy] Jarocki's performances. A non-illustrative approach to the dramatic text as material, a type of theatre imagination, psychological intensity, and the abbreviation of thought – these are features of Grotowski's theatre. Before Grotowski, psychological logic did not allow for such jumps or psychological cuts within one scene, as happens, for instance, in Jarocki's *Ślub* (The Marriage).[23] Jarocki achieves similar effects from a different angle; but the methods of building the theatre reality are Jerzy Grotowski's.

And what about the method of incantation used by [Jerzy] Grzegorzewski? This is almost impossible to distinguish today, because our ears don't hurt any more! It has been annexed by the theatre. Like a prototyping lab attached to a car factory, where they also create the initial designs then gradually integrate some changes. And after five years nobody is surprised that an automatic gearbox emerges. That is a bit like how it worked for us. And such work does not always continue in a straightforward way. It's similar, for instance, in the case of [Witold] Gombrowicz, but could you say that his work hasn't affected our literature? Of course, the poetics of our theatre have been discussed and criticised, and the same has been done with our very cold, intellectual interpretation of Romanticism, and with our alleged anti-aestheticism or dazzling through shock.

Błajet-Wilniewczyc: But theatre could, and still can, make use of the method of physical actions, which is a very specific instrument for working with actors, which improves the breathing and the vocal apparatus and physical and vocal integrity, and so on.

Bielski: Of course it was also a method of working with actors based on a system of exercises, through which artificiality and acting conventions were rejected, a method that allowed us to achieve the truth of a human being, and additionally the ability to capture and repeat this found state. This is the real and measurable input of Grotowski into the theatre. [...]

TRANSLATED BY JUSTYNA DROBNIK-ROGERS

[23] *Ślub* (The Marriage) is a play by Witold Gombrowicz. Jarocki staged this play several times, including at the Teatr Dramatyczny (Drama Theatre) in 1974 and at the Stary Teatr (Old Theatre) in Kraków in 1991, but also in Zurich, Belgrade, and Novi Sad. Trans.

In Jerzy Grotowski's Theatre

MAJA KOMOROWSKA TALKS TO BARBARA OSTERLOFF

MAJA KOMOROWSKA is a well-known theatre and film actor, and pedagogue. She joined the Teatr 13 Rzędów (Theatre of the 13 Rows) in Opole in 1961 and collaborated with Jerzy Grotowski until 1968, with a break for nearly a year in 1964. After she left the Laboratorium, she worked with two Wrocław theatres: the Współczesny (Contemporary Theatre, 1968-1970) and the Polski (Polish Theatre, 1970-1972). In 1972, she moved to Warsaw's Teatr Współczesny where she continues to work today. She has played numerous guest roles at other Warsaw theatres such as the Stara Prochownia (Old Gunpowder Store), the Scena Prezentacje (Presentation Stage), and the Teatr Dramatyczny (Drama Theatre) where she collaborated with Krystian Lupa on Thomas Bernhard's performance *Auslöschung – Wymazywanie* (2001). Since 1982, she has taught in the Warsaw Akademia Teatralna (Theatre Academy). From 1970-1971 she started acting in Krzysztof Zanussi's films *Życie rodzinne* (Family Life) and *Za ścianą* (Behind the Wall) which began her long-term collaboration with the filmmaker and her film career. She has appeared in many films by leading Polish film directors such as Filip Bajon, Krzysztof Kieślowski, Tadeusz Konwicki, Andrzej Wajda, and Krzysztof Zanussi.

This conversation was originally published as 'W teatrze Jerzego Grotowskiego', *Teatr*, 7-8 (2004), 19-27, and reprinted in *Pejzaż – rozmowy z Mają Komorowską* (Landscape: Conversations with Maja Komorowska), ed. by Barbara Osterloff (Warsaw: Oficyna Wydawnicza Errata, 2004), pp. 19-33.

Barbara Osterloff: In what circumstances did you join the Teatr 13 Rzędów in Opole? Did Jerzy Grotowski invite you or did you apply to join the company? The Teatr 13 Rzędów was then, in 1961, still barely known, although it had already had its first, important, and controversial premieres.

Maja Komorowska: I can't quite remember, but I think Jerzy Grotowski sent me a letter with an offer to join the Teatr 13 Rzędów in Opole. I knew him from drama school, but more by sight, though perhaps we had spoken to each other a few times. It was a passing acquaintance and I didn't know much about him.

Osterloff: But I suppose you had seen some of the performances of the Teatr 13 Rzędów before you signed the contract?

Komorowska: Yes, I went to Opole and had seen *Dziady* (Forefathers' Eve). [...]

I cannot even say whether I liked this performance or not. I just knew that what I saw then was so different from everything I had seen before in the theatre – and that it reminded me of something, it was like I knew these images from previous dreams. Not long before I joined the Teatr 13 Rzędów they had done Kalidasa's *Shakuntala*, but I hadn't seen it.

Osterloff: Was the decision to join this theatre carefully thought-through or rather spontaneous?

Komorowska: I didn't even hesitate, although I normally find it difficult making decisions. When I think about this now, I'm a bit surprised, but then I did not think that I was meant to ponder on it – I just felt that this was what I should do. And I made up my mind. I left behind Kraków and my husband, Jerzy Tyszkiewicz, who was still studying law there. We were apart for some time and used to meet on Saturdays and Sundays before he could move to Opole.

Osterloff: What was this beginning in Opole like?

Komorowska: Everything was new to me. The Teatr 13 Rzędów, Opole itself, which I didn't know; and the fact that for a while I had to be there on my own and that I didn't

have anywhere to live. I went there with one suitcase and my wandering began. I stayed for a while at Urszula Czajkowska's – at that time she wasn't yet married to Andrzej Bielski, my colleague from the Teatr 13 Rzędów. I lived in various places and conditions; I sometimes had to spend the night sleeping on a sofa.

I remember once when it was very cold, nothing was heated properly, so Maciek [Maciej] Prus and I would go to Chełmek, a shoe shop on the main street in Opole, in order to warm ourselves. Of course, we had to try some shoes on, and we pretended that we were going to buy some… We would then take out our sandwiches in the shop, to eat in a warm place. When I think about that time now, I don't know how all this was possible. But we were young then.

The Teatr 13 Rzędów was always at risk; one minute they would shut it down, the next they would extend our contract. When the theatre was going to be shut down, Jerzy Grotowski would call us to say that it was uncertain whether we would be able to continue working, because there was no money etc., etc.

Osterloff: Whom do you remember from the Teatr 13 Rzędów group?

Maja Komorowska and Stanisław Scierski during rehearsals for *The Constant Prince* (1965).
Photograph: Marek Czudowski, CAF/PAP.

Komorowska: During the period when I was there, there already existed a group of permanent members. The first people I met were Rena Mirecka, Zygmunt Molik, Antoni Jahołkowski, Zbigniew Cynkutis, Ewa Lubowiecka (for a certain time only), Andrzej Bielski, and then Andrzej Kulig and Mietek [Mieczysław] Janowski joined. There was also Waldek [Waldemar] Krygier (director and founder of Teatr 38), and – as I've already mentioned – Maciej Prus (he was there for a certain time only; I remember Maciek singing various arias to our little son). I think Ryszard Cieślak joined just after I did, or perhaps at the same time. I knew him from drama school in Kraków, as he'd also studied in the puppetry department; he was interested in photography and took beautiful pictures. I even thought he was going to go to film school to study cinematography. Perhaps Stanisław Scierski was the last one I met.[1]

Osterloff: How did your work in Opole start?

Komorowska: At the beginning we didn't have any compulsory exercises. My first part was the character of Aglaya in Dostoevsky's *The Idiot*, directed by Waldemar Krygier.[2] I was interested in this character and I remember that the performance was a good one. We performed it a lot, and took it to Kraków.[3] Zbyszek [Zbigniew] Cynkutis played Myshkin. There were two versions of the performance,

[1] Jahołkowski, Mirecka, and Molik were members of the first team, when Grotowski and Flaszen took over the Teatr 13 Rzędów and opened the new season on 1 September 1959. Cynkutis joined on 1 June 1961; Lubowiecka, who joined in the 1960/61 season, was in the company until 1 October 1962; Bielski joined on 1 May 1960 and left the group soon after the theatre moved to Wrocław in January 1965; Andrzej (Gaston) Kulig joined in September 1963 and left in 1965 (before the second version of *The Constant Prince*, premiere on 14 November); Janowski joined before the premiere of *Dr Faustus* on 23 April 1963 and left before the premiere of the third version of *The Constant Prince* (on 19 March 1968); Prus joined for the 1962/63 season; Cieślak joined on 1 October 1961; Scierski joined on 1 September 1964, as an apprentice. Komorowska herself joined on 1 October 1961. Eds.

[2] Premiered on 22 October 1961. Eds.

[3] Eight performances between 23 March and 8 April 1962 – five in Teatr 38 and three in the Krzysztofory Gallery. Eds.

Maja Komorowska undertaking training exercises, 1964.
Photograph: Fredi Graedel.

one with Nastasya and one without her. Ewa Lubowiecka played this part. When Ewa wasn't acting with us, a chair was covered by a black cloth as though everything was taking place after Nastasya's death. There was a table in the middle with some chairs around it; the spectators were situated on both sides. We performed around and at the table. Waldek Krygier came up with the costumes and they were like wonderful paintings. My costume was black, red, and white. On my head I had something that reminded me of the headpieces worn by Orthodox nuns.

At the beginning of the performance, I faced one section of the spectators (my back was turned towards the other half). I stood there and my laughter began and climbed gradually from being very quiet to the culminating moment when I said: 'To welcome – shall I welcome him?' [Przyjąć, ja mam go przyjąć?]. That's how the performance started. Later on, we sat around the table. Antek [Antoni] Jahołkowski played the character of Rogozhin and Zygmunt Molik stood behind a chair and sang the aria 'Ya lyublyu tebya Tatyana' (I love you, Tatiana) from Tchaikovsky's *Eugene Onegin*.[4] I remember how at some points we swapped places following the rhythm of a social dance, I think it was a minuet, so that each of us ended up sitting on a different chair, somebody else's. I also remember the way we ate. Each of us did it differently, in a different rhythm – depending on which character we were playing and the state of the character at that time. Rogozhin ate greedily and spat. Myshkin had an attack whilst eating, at a particular moment his body shivered and he had convulsions. Zbyszek Cynkutis played the role beautifully. We performed *The Idiot* in such a small space, but so many things were going on. This performance kept me in suspense. As far as I can remember, I think the audience felt the same way.

Osterloff: And when did you begin the exercises?

Komorowska: The exercises began later. We did such a wide range of exercises which were so different from what I had known at drama school. It is even difficult to compare them. For instance, at school, we'd be given an étude entitled 'You've received a telegram that a relative has died', 'You've won the lottery' or 'Fire! Fire!'.

Rena Mirecka ran the *plastiques* work, which, generally speaking, was based on exercising

[4] In Russian in the original Polish text. Trans.

Ryszard Cieślak doing a shoulder stand during training in 1964.
Photograph: Fredi Graedel.

the whole body. They [the *plastiques*] began with exercising your head, arms, hands, fingers and then your legs and hips. What were they like? Let's say I was doing the hand or finger exercises. It's simple to do; you just need to move them in a circle so that your hand bends as far as possible. If my fingers are directed downwards, they need to touch the wrist, as low down as possible. You need to overcome the resistance of the joints in order to achieve a lightness of movement and fluidity, so that it's no longer an effort. Only from that kind of movement can you build a scene, which we needed to construct and which had a beginning, a middle, and an end. The associations and impulses were the starting point for this.

How did the acting études come out of these exercises? Based on the example of the finger exercise, I'll tell you what happened in the particular stages of movement. When the hand starts going upwards, this is a moment which is associated – and this is very obvious – with, for example, a gesture of saying goodbye. This association depends on the moment when I stop the hand and how I frame the movement. If, for instance, I direct it to one side, we can imagine that we are giving directions to somebody; and you can make an étude based on this. And this is how it works with the whole body – you can begin the études from the movement of the head, the arms, the hips, or the legs.

The physical and acrobatic exercises led by Ryszard Cieślak, which were based on elements from yoga, have already been well described by others. But I want to mention one exercise. When we went to Sweden with *The Constant Prince*, I showed how a headstand – a purely gymnastic exercise – could become an acting étude. Obviously, a range of variants was possible. For example, my head is tired and it would be great to lay it down somewhere to rest for a moment. We can either support the head or we can search for the position that would be best for the head. This is happening here and now, so the searching needs to go on for some time. We still cannot find an appropriate position. So we continue searching. At last I place my head on the floor or on the ground (and we put our hands there). I straighten my trunk slowly, but my legs are still in a foetal position, they are contracted. In the next phase, the legs slowly straighten. The most important thing is to find the moment in which your body is ready for the climax – to shoot your legs upwards as though you want to touch the ceiling with your feet. That's how you achieve a 'scream' of the body, which Grotowski called 'excess'.

But then you need to get out of it. How do we do that? What can the body feel? Is the body aware that it has just done something significant? Now, a new possibility emerges – to compose an étude of coiling oneself up. First, we release the legs, then slowly the whole of the body and then we reach the foetal position. If the body is really taking part in the search, it dictates the behaviour on its own. And when the whole process is executed well, the spectator does not notice any physical (technical) effort in the evolution. The étude is able to 'pull in' the spectator's imagination.

We worked with Zygmunt Molik on voice exercises. They are also well described and anyone who is interested in this is able to

examine them.[5] For me, at that time, these exercises were both important and difficult. They were a discovery for me. I always had a rough voice: not very 'nice', objectively speaking. I had to work a lot in order to be able to do something with it; I had to learn how to use it. And the work on resonators was very helpful. But it was also something new for me.

One day, Jerzy Grotowski came up with the themes of the vocal études. I had never encountered such vocal études before. Everyone had to choose a few lines from a song and make an étude out of it. I chose 'A z rana, z rana, pięknie ubrana stoi w okienku jak malowana' (In the morning, in the morning she stands at the window beautifully dressed and looks as though she has been painted). And with these words, through the melody, which was to be changed in various ways, I was to compose the story of a girl; I came up with the whole story. I understood then that it is not enough to invent something, but that this story has to be *communicative*. Again I had to use my imagination in order to express the same words, to order them and accompany them with the melody so that they tell the story – without any bodily movement!

Firstly, the girl was young… everything was ahead of her, was waiting for her – so, at first, the words of this song had to seduce and attract others' attention. And then the girl had a child and used these words and melody as a lullaby, but later, somehow, she became sad. So I had to express the same words in a different way – I had to reflect this sadness and 'lack of movement' by means of sound.

At first, working on these scenes I had to provoke all these associations in myself, so that I was then able to translate them into a bodily language. The body had to remind itself what existed in the head, what we have encoded in our memory as an image.

Here I could tell you about many études. There were many, so many that I couldn't even begin to count them. The work lasted continuously from morning till evening. The most important thing was to *exercise your imagination*. Sometimes Jerzy Grotowski gave us a theme; sometimes we found the theme by ourselves. We often used observations of the animal kingdom. For instance, Andrzej Kulig, whose nickname was Gaston (he later emigrated to Paris), and I did a sequence about horses. It was our idea – the youth of horses, their love and their growing old. A horse-human. It engaged our thoughts and associations. When we worked on the 'youth of the horses', there was a moment when the horses had to lie down on the ground. It seems a simple task, but – how to lie down? We didn't want any normal kind of lying down on the floor. We searched for something different, we wanted it to be appropriately expressive and we wanted it to be visible. The faces/muzzles had to express what was important for us. But yes, when a horse-human lies down you cannot see its head…

We understood that we had to lie down at a certain angle. This uncomfortable position provided a tension, a form of expression and additionally it made our horses human. It appeared that when I lay down comfortably, there was no expression in my body, even though I would try to find tension in my hands and legs. These were discoveries for me. I still wasn't aware of many things at that stage. For instance, I wasn't aware of the potential of 'framing' – that is, to stop a movement at the most expressive moment. I remember there was one moment when a horse put its head on the nape of the neck of another horse; these horses were hooked on to each other – it was a moment of rest… of love…

We were looking for a way of showing the rebellion of the horses and we were thinking about how this rebellion was born. We wanted to find a moment in which the framing of the movement in this sharp and dynamic scene was really needed and when this

Ryszard Cieślak, Maja Komorowska, and Antoni Jahołkowski in the first version of Wyspiański's *Akropolis* (1962).
Photograph: Teatr Laboratorium.

[5] See, for example, Giuliano Campo and Zygmunt Molik, *Zygmunt Molik's Voice and Body Work: The Legacy of Jerzy Grotowski* (London and New York: Routledge, 2010). Eds.

framing would reinforce what we wanted to say. But we also had to think about what would happen after this framing – how would we get out of this stillness? I remember this holding of the movement in the scene of the horses' rebellion as a wearisome physical experience. We put our bodies through a difficult test – it was like a kind of *hara-kiri* being performed on ourselves.

How much distance should there be between these horses? Sometimes they were some distance from each other, as if poles apart. And sometimes they had to be connected, almost one to the other. Sometimes they jumped to their feet at a full gallop and suddenly, while at the peak state of their wildness, they had to stop – and that was this moment of framing that I mentioned earlier. All the time we kept on thinking about the condition of an animal and of a person, and we searched for the point where these conditions connect. We worked on it for weeks. I was so engrossed in this that I didn't even consider if anyone would like it or not. I wasn't afraid, I just searched. What helped me? I used to close my eyes and see memories from my childhood, of horses and dogs.

We presented this work on horses to Jerzy Grotowski. I was always scared of these presentations, but it appeared that our étude interested him. So we continued working on it.

There were various stories with these presentations. Sometimes we searched for two weeks, sometimes for three. We would then show this étude to Grotowski and he would say either 'I believe' or 'I don't believe', 'I don't understand' and then everything had to start from scratch. Occasionally, Grotowski would ask those who had watched the étude what the story was about and whether they had understood it, and he would listen carefully to their answers. Sometimes somebody said, 'I don't understand it, but I believe it…' And if Grotowski agreed with this, we knew that it was possible to continue working on it; that there was some chance of improving this étude. But sometimes we did something that was completely unreadable and then the work was discontinued. Of course Grotowski made these confrontations at a certain stage in our work on an étude. But he also did it during work on a performance. He used to watch all the performances; he never missed any. There were notes afterwards and everyone took them down: what the mistakes were, where something was untrue, where Grotowski didn't believe something, etc., etc. Unfortunately I don't have these notes any more. Our work was never-ending.

Osterloff: You took part in the first version of *Akropolis*, from 1962.[6] Can you please say what you remember of the work on this outstanding performance, for which Józef Szajna designed the set?

Komorowska: Unfortunately, as usual, I remember only some images, only scraps. I played Rachel. I associate *Akropolis* with work on the mask. And I remembered this mask because of Thomas Richards' book, recently published in Poland, in which he describes his own struggles with the mask (how he tried to compose his facial muscles in the mirror).[7] I will try to describe this using the example of my Rachel. The mask means keeping a single facial expression. But which one? What is the most important thing about any particular character? What should the face express? You need to form it, but this forming needs to come from the inside out. Who is Rachel in a concentration camp, in this march towards death? Which facial expression would be most appropriate to reflect what she is experiencing? And how to find it?

Sometimes I imagined that Rachel was sitting inside me, sometimes that I put Rachel on me like I would put a stocking over the top of my head, like a long sleeve. After many rehearsals and a great deal of reflection, I decided: I have fear in my eyes, but

[6] Premiere on 10 October 1962. Eds.

[7] Thomas Richards' *At Work with Grotowski on Physical Actions* (1995) was published in Polish in a translation by Andrzej Wojtasik and Magda Złotowska (Kraków: Homini, 2003). Eds.

The final scene of the first version of *Akropolis* (1962). From the left: Maja Komorowska, Rena Mirecka, Zbigniew Cynkutis, Ryszard Cieślak, and Zygmunt Molik. Photographer unknown.

my mouth tries to smile, a kind of stuck-on smile. It is not strange that I came up with this, because, since I am afraid, since I have fear in my eyes, my mouth tries to overcome this fear and oppose it. My eyebrows conveyed surprise, which means they went upwards, but not like those of Zbyszek Cynkutis. He was so surprised that his eyebrows went right up underneath his hat, under the skullcap he had on his head.

And you had to keep the mask shaped like that; you couldn't change it, from the beginning of the performance till the end.

We worked on the mask only during rehearsing and performing *Akropolis*. Grotowski examined it, saw it, and it seems he needed such an experiment at that time. After that we did not return to the mask. And I… I can say that to some extent this helped me in my subsequent work, especially during [Samuel] Beckett's *Happy Days*.[8] In the second part of the performance when only my head was sticking out of the mound, I could carefully control what my head had to express at a certain moment; I could hold and frame individual facial expressions.

I keep in my memory one more image from *Akropolis* – the last scene: all of us marching towards death. We are wearing sacks full of holes with some pieces of plastic and heavy lace-up boots, prisoners' boots. I-as-Rachel was trying to walk as though I didn't have these boots on, but rather was on tiptoes, as if in *pointe* shoes [from ballet]. My Rachel was walking to her death in the best possible way. Now, every time I put on lace-up shoes, I am unable to chase this image away. My memory always goes back to this march.

I remember the period of work on *Akropolis* well. I was expecting my baby. There were many iron pipes on stage and I had to be very careful not to harm the baby. When I fell onto these pipes, at the last moment I put my hands out beneath me… thankfully, I had strong hands… My part was later divided between two actors.

Osterloff: Soon after that you left Jerzy Grotowski's company – why?

Komorowska: Yes, I left.[9] I thought that was what I should do and I didn't know whether I would ever return. I went to Warsaw. It was certainly a difficult decision. My husband stayed in Opole. He had to because he worked there. In Warsaw, I lived with my little baby at my sister-in-law Maryna's. I worked a bit in radio, a bit in the theatre. I did some choreography, for instance for a dance in [José-André] Lacour's comedy *Graduation Year* at the [Praski] Teatr Ludowy (Praga People's Theatre),[10] in which Ewa Wiśniewska took part.[11] Krysia

[8] Komorowska played Winnie at the Teatr Dramatyczny in Warsaw. The premiere of the performance directed by Antoni Libera took place on 30 November 1995. Komorowska revived this role there in November 2008. Eds.

[9] On 1 November 1962. Eds.

[10] The performance, directed by Jan Bratkowski, opened on 3 May 1964. Eds.

[11] Ewa Wiśniewska (b. 1942) is a famous Polish actor

Szantyr, my school friend from Komorów, helped me with this choreography. Having had the experience of working with Jerzy Grotowski, I made sure that the actors trained properly. Their pretending irritated me. I know that somebody even complained that I was too demanding and was wearing them out.

At that time, I passed the extra-mural acting exam at the PWST (Państwowa Wyższa Szkoła Teatralna – State Higher Theatre School), just in case, in order to avoid problems later if I should want to get a job at a so-called 'normal' theatre.

After a few months, I received a letter from Grotowski with an offer to continue working with him. I thought that this phase was already closed for me. But I went back.[12] I returned to Opole, although only for a short while, because then we moved to Wrocław. There were days in Opole when I had to train and didn't have anyone to look after little Paweł (at first the exercises were at the theatre, later on in a space we used to rent). I'd walk there with my pram, get changed, and go and take part in the training. I would exercise and during the breaks I'd go out and check whether everything was okay with my child. I remember that this was difficult.

Osterloff: The theatre moved to Wrocław at the beginning of January 1965.

Komorowska: Yes. I have a memory from this time of moving from Opole to Wrocław: my husband and I packed all our belongings into a small pushchair-like buggy and we pulled this buggy to the railway station. From there we went to Wrocław.

At first, we didn't have anywhere to stay in Wrocław, so we stayed in a hotel. For the whole of this time, our baby Paweł was in Laski, near Warsaw, with my sister-in law Olga Czartoryska and her husband Andrzej.

Our work in Wrocław was even more intensive and extraordinary than it had been in Opole.

Osterloff: Which members of the Teatr 13 Rzędów moved to Wrocław?

Komorowska: There was Rena Mirecka, Zygmunt Molik, Antek Jahołkowski, Andrzej Bielski, Ryszard Cieślak, Zbyszek Cynkutis, Stanisław (nicknamed 'Stanley') Scierski, Andrzej Kulig, and Mietek Janowski. I also remember Jurek [Jerzy] Gurawski, a wonderful architect who had a very particular sense of humour and was able to keep his distance at difficult moments, thanks to which he would often be able to release any tensions. Ludwik Flaszen was there of course. Many people from this group are no longer alive: Stanley Scierski is dead, Zbyszek Cynkutis is dead, Ryszard Cieślak is dead, Antoni Jahołkowski is dead, as well as Andrzej Bielski.

Osterloff: Who is still alive, then?

Komorowska: From the group that went from Opole to Wrocław, there is only Rena Mirecka, Zygmunt Molik, Mietek Janowski, and me.[13] And I hope that Andrzej Kulig, with whom unfortunately I lost touch, is also alive. He did so much good for me; I would like to find him.

In Wrocław, we started guarding our space.[14]

Osterloff: What do you mean 'guarding'?

Komorowska: I mean it in the most literal sense, because we didn't know whether they [the authorities] would want to take it back from us, so we took shifts, night and day. We protected our space, we really looked after it; we scrubbed it and washed it, all this had to be done precisely… because of the amount of exercises we did on the floor… a lot of our sweat soaked into that floor. We did the cleaning, we polished it, we prepared the space ourselves – it was hard work. We prepared the costumes – sometimes someone would help with the washing and ironing, but

known for her many roles in film, television and theatre. She has worked at various repertory theatres in Warsaw. Trans.

[12] Komorowska re-joined the group with the new season, on 1 September 1964. Eds.

[13] Zygmunt Molik died on 6 June 2010, in Wrocław. Eds.

[14] The theatre was meant to work in the space of the old Observant abbey at 5 Bernardyńska Street in Wrocław, but was temporarily located at the old market square in the space of the Dom Związków Twórczych (House of the Creative Unions), which became its permanent location until its self-dissolution in 1984. Eds.

in principle we did everything by ourselves. It was an important experience. Up to now, whenever I leave a theatre, I always clean up after myself. This has stayed with me.

Osterloff: In Wrocław, Grotowski developed his idea of 'poor theatre'.[15] The Teatr Laboratorium was at the same time a laboratory and a research theatre, not only a place in which the actors and spectators would meet during the performance. The work on *The Constant Prince* began there; the production in which you performed for almost five years.[16] How did you work on this piece?

Komorowska: Zbigniew Osiński and Eugenio Barba, among others, have already described this precisely.

Osterloff: But could you try to talk about it from your own point of view?

Komorowska: During rehearsals for *The Constant Prince*, Jerzy Grotowski worked with Ryszard Cieślak apart. We, the rest of the actors, worked separately. Do you remember that scene [with Cieślak] on the rostrum… that is preserved in the film recording? When the day came that all the rest of us were able to see it, I was shocked.

We all had long boots on, and I was Tarudant.[17] Tarudant who fought… I was searching for associations with the animal world. At some moments, his fighting brought up associations for me with a cockfight. A cock… a fighting cockerel… Each of the cock's movements in this heavy cloak and long boots became very apparent. The audience observed the performance sitting around the stage, on the rostra, as during a *corrida*, a bullfight – they were separated from the performing space by a high palisade, a kind of wooden 'wall'. There was a rostrum in the middle. I remember a fragment of a scene with Antek [Antoni] Jahołkowski, when I was on my knees near Ryszard's feet and Antek was lifting me up and hitting my face.

Osterloff: You performed with your face covered by your hair. Somebody has said that Jerzy Grotowski wanted you to cover your face with your hair because you were shapely and pretty…

Komorowska:…well, I prefer not to think of it in that way; perhaps he wanted to bring something out of me of which I wasn't aware? The task we're talking about was certainly very challenging for me. At the beginning my back couldn't take it, even though I was young. To perform this part in a half-bent-over manner, unable to straighten up even for a moment, with hair falling down all over my face… At the beginning, I thought it was impossible. But I managed.

And suddenly, from that creature, a lullaby could come out, a warm and gentle lullaby… There was this whole aspect of gentleness which until then had been hidden within this strange 'bird'. Such a contradiction. I improvised this lullaby using the motif of 'Ey, ukhnem' from the Burlack (boatmen's) song.[18] This obviously became transformed. Why did I come up with this? Well, perhaps this effort, this hardship of being bent double, this hair covering my face, all of this evoked such an image of hard work.

We played many performances in Sweden, Norway, and Denmark, and I lost my voice in Stockholm. They took me to a clinic there, they 'oiled' my vocal chords and told me to murmur continuously before the performance, so that my vocal chords were in movement and my voice wouldn't disappear. Someone wrote somewhere that I was singing an African lullaby…

---

[15] Actually it was Ludwik Flaszen who coined the term. Eds.

[16] In fact, the work on *The Constant Prince* started in Opole. Calderón/Słowacki's play first appeared in the repertory plans for the 1963/64 season. In a letter to the local authorities dated 21 May 1964 Grotowski wrote about the beginning of work on the new premiere. In his book, Zbigniew Osiński wrote that in the letter addressed to him dated 7 June 1964, Ryszard Cieślak mentions: '[…] we prepare *The Constant Prince*'. See Osiński: *Teatr '13 Rzędów' i Teatr Laboratorium '13 Rzędów', Opole 1959-1964. Kronika-Bibliografia* (The Theatre of the '13 Rows' and the Laboratory Theatre of '13 Rows', Opole 1959-1964: A Chronicle-Bibliography) (Opole: Galeria Sztuki Współczesnej w Opolu, Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Opolskiego, 1997), p. 159. Eds.

[17] When Komorowska left the company at the beginning of 1968 Zygmunt Molik took on the role. Eds.

[18] Komorowska appears to be referring to a motif from the 'Song of the Volga Boatmen', roughly equivalent to 'Yo, heave ho'. Eds.

I associated [this work] with the Pietà and I think this was how the spectators saw it when I took Ryszard in my arms like a mother, someone taking care. I remember one performance in Stockholm, when Ryszard had a dislocated or broken leg. Before the performances they would take him to the hospital for special injections, without which he wasn't able to walk. At the end of the piece, I would almost be carrying him. Where does such strength come from? I didn't have a voice and his legs didn't work. I remember that the floor on which we were walking was wet… it was extremely hard work… I will always remember this. Yes, this was *The Constant Prince*.

Osterloff: Do you remember what it was like when you saw Ryszard Cieślak in this role for the first time? What was your reaction?

Komorowska: I was shocked, as I've already mentioned. But I believe most of all I was astonished. I felt I was watching something so intimate that I ended up bowing my head even lower, uncertain as to whether or not I should see it, whether it was really meant for me to watch. It was an unusual confession, a sharing of something most important – such a gift. Those rehearsals of Jerzy Grotowski and Ryszard Cieślak together were the period when a new Ryszard was being born. After *The Constant Prince*, the work on *Apocalypsis* [*cum Figuris*] started. I was working a lot once again. There were many études that led to the scene with the two women, for instance.[19] I performed this with Rena Mirecka. We were going to visit a grave. Before doing this, we had to prepare, wash our feet, and get dressed. At first, we had white shirts on, then we put long black dress-coats over them; we were hurrying to the grave, each of us wanting to be first, to get as quickly as possible near the *Oblubieniec* (The Betrothed).

Of everything, this work was the closest to me in Grotowski's theatre. Before the summer vacation [of 1967], we had a summary showing of this work and then I never came back to it.[20]

Osterloff: The work you mention, as Professor Zbigniew Osiński has written, was called *Ewangelie* (The Gospels). And it was presented a few times.[21] You played the part of Mary Magdalene, Ryszard Cieślak was *Umiłowany* (The Beloved). *Apocalypsis cum Figuris* later crystallised out of this performance.

Komorowska: Elizabeth Albahaca then joined the company [in 1968] and what I'd been doing before was divided between the two of us [Grotowski and me]. I left Jerzy Grotowski's theatre. Today, people often ask me why. I think it was the right decision. The decision was made by both of us, as we both understood that I had to go and do 'my own' things. And this is all that I want to say about it. Besides, I think that Jerzy Grotowski had understood earlier than I did that I should 'disconnect' myself from the group and go and search on my own. He knew that I couldn't devote myself totally to the Teatr Laboratorium – I was already a mother, and this had to have some impact on my choices and searches. And I had to try to make sense of it all.

Osterloff: Combining motherhood with work at the Teatr 13 Rzędów must have been extremely difficult, because even the rhythm of work in this group was very exhausting.

Komorowska: Yes. In Wrocław we would often work all night. Everyone could later go and sleep, but I was looking after my son. I wasn't able to 'switch off' from my private life completely; I couldn't just devote myself to work. Was it at all possible for an actor with a child to be in this group? I was thinking about this a lot, even in Opole. I decided to prove it was possible, due to my inhuman stubbornness. This stubbornness was necessary, because without it, I wouldn't have been able to return to this group at all. You had to endure the work in Wrocław both mentally and physically. The

[19] This scene is included in Krzysztof Domagalik's film *Sacrilegious Rite, Abounding in Sorcery* (1980), shortly to be published by *PTP*. Eds.

[20] Komorowska started to work at the Teatr Współczesny in Wrocław on 1 March 1968. Eds.

[21] In fact, once only, on 20 March 1967. Eds.

In the foreground: Maja Komorowska and Ryszard Cieślak in the first version of *The Constant Prince* (1965). Photograph: Zygmunt Samosiuk.

work was exhausting, but I had done sports since my childhood, so I was fit – I've mentioned this already – and these exercises, the acrobatics, the handstands, and the headstands weren't difficult for me. Paradoxically, this was a problem because they weren't being engendered in me in the way that Jerzy Grotowski wanted them to be. I was doing headstands without any problem; my body was ready for it. I didn't have to activate my imagination. I remember a remark Jerzy Grotowski made when he was observing the exercises: 'This is not being born, it is already ready'. It's true, it was ready. I didn't pretend that I was searching for how to do a headstand, because I already knew how to do it. Of course, I could search and return to the moment when I'd originally learnt to do it, but I didn't think about it at that time.

Later, Jerzy Grotowski came to see [Samuel] Beckett's *Endgame*, in which I played Hamm;[22] he also saw *Bolesław Śmiały*[23] and probably *Antigone* as well.[24] I remember when he came to Warsaw and was the only spectator of the film *Za ścianą* (Behind the Wall) because the screening had been organised especially for him.[25] I also remem-

[22] Directed by Jerzy Krasowski at the Teatr Polski in Wrocław, with a premiere on 17 February 1972. Eds.

[23] *Bolesław Śmiały* (Bolesław the Brave) is Stanisław Wyspiański's play, directed by Helmut Kajzar at the Wrocławski Teatr Współczesny. The performance opened on 2 March 1969. Komorowska played the character of Krasawica. Trans.

[24] Directed by Helmut Kajzar at the Teatr Polski in Wrocław and with a premiere on 15 May 1971. Komorowska played the title role. Eds.

[25] *Za ścianą* (1971) is a short feature film by Krzysztof Zanussi. It took the Grand Prix and won the Best Actress prize for Maja Komorowska at the San Remo Film Festival in 1971. Trans.

ber his warm letter, which he wrote after my book *31 dni maja* (31 Days of May) was published.[26] When, after many years, I met Jerzy Grotowski in France – and then in Warsaw and Wrocław – we could speak a lot to each other about all the good and the difficult issues.

Osterloff: How did Grotowski address you? Did you call each other by your first names?

Komorowska: At first, we addressed each other by our first names, because, as I said, we knew each other from drama school in Kraków. In Opole, I met Jerzy Grotowski one day at a milk bar and I suggested we should address each other in a more official way and call each other *pan*, *pani* (Mr, Mrs).[27] He told me: 'Maja, it will be confusing for you, it won't work'. But I never made any mistakes. Only years later, when we met for the last time, in Wrocław, not long before his death, did we once again begin to call each other by our first names.

Osterloff: You have mentioned during many interviews and public meetings that the experience you gained during your work with Jerzy Grotowski hasn't been wasted. Could we try to summarise this experience?

Komorowska: To put it briefly, thanks to this work my imagination became well-exercised. I often describe it using this phrase, but I can't find a better one. I learnt to focus and use my voice, managing to avoid all unpredictable obstacles. My body had already been well-trained, but certainly its fitness was reinforced by the daily exercises, which lasted for many hours. Later on, for instance, when filming *Bilans kwartalny* (Quarterly Balance), I had to do jumps, yoga, headstands, and trampolining – my body was still working even though I was already no longer young.[28] My body was focused, ready for any effort, ready to jump. I think I still benefit from that time, from that experience.

Osterloff: Did you continue with this rigour after you had left Grotowski's theatre?

Komorowska: No. Maintaining this level of rigour wasn't possible, but I did prepare myself properly for each part that I played. I exercised mainly when I needed something specific for work. I used to start my day very early and finish late after the theatre performances, so there was no time for exercises. I used to have one premiere after another, then performances and rehearsals. I've worked a great deal.

Osterloff: We've said a lot here about the training of the body as an important element in Jerzy Grotowski's theatre. It was a means to achieve absolute control over the body, this instrument of the art of acting. Through the training, the actors could reach the most profound layers of their spirituality in order to be able to express it later in the process of creating the theatrical signs. Please tell us what else influenced your future career – apart from the practical habit of undergoing this training – that you got from your experience with the Teatr Laboratorium? To what extent has Grotowski also shaped your understanding of theatre? These are important questions, because you are the only actor from Grotowski's group who found a place for herself within a different genre, the genre of professional, literary theatre.

Komorowska: Certainly, I learned from him a way of thinking – starting from defining what the theatre is, what it can be, and what it is not. Jerzy Grotowski put an emphasis on what made the art of the theatre distinctive. For him, its core lay with the spectator-actor relationship. The performing space was also very crucial, since their *encounter* was to take place there. Architecture was important, not scenography. Jerzy Gurawski prepared a different spatial solution for each performance. The music was the sound we created ourselves – the sound of steps, props, breathing, the composition of human voices... Grotowski used to say

[26] The book was published in Warsaw by Tenten in 1993. Trans.

[27] A milk bar was a state-owned and -run canteen common during communist times where food (not always of the best quality) could be bought quite cheaply. Eds.

[28] *Bilans kwartalny* was a 1974 feature film directed by Krzysztof Zanussi. Trans.

that the power of the theatre is in subtraction, not addition. And this ability of the actor to undergo a transformation in front of the spectators' eyes... I would like to focus here for a moment on the issue of the actor in Jerzy Grotowski's theatre. Once, in Vienna, there was an evening dedicated to Jerzy Grotowski, where I met his group from Pontedera, and also Ludwik Flaszen. I spoke about my experience of working at the Teatr Laboratorium. In preparing for that evening, I went back to the book *Teksty z lat 1965-1969* (Texts from 1965-1969) and I tried to realise what the most important thing had been for me, from the perspective of time, what had continuously helped my artistic work and what I had managed to transfer to my work in the so-called 'ordinary' theatre.[29]

Grotowski taught me diligence: if the body is to be a sensitive instrument, without which real creativity by the actor is impossible, you need to exercise; you simply need to work. Of course, this is connected to concentration. I understood how important his thinking was: 'a personal process which is not supported and expressed by a formal articulation and disciplined structuring [...] will collapse in shapelessness'.[30]

An important point for me was that spontaneity and discipline are not mutually exclusive but rather the opposite, that 'far from weakening each another, [they] mutually reinforce themselves';[31] often a daily naturalness serves to hide the truth,[32] so it is not about putting a mask on, but taking it off. For me, 'The form is like a baited trap, to which the spiritual process responds spontaneously and against which it struggles' is a remarkable sentence – I underlined this statement.[33] I also marked the fragment: 'Why are we concerned with art? To cross our frontiers, exceed our limitations, fill our emptiness – fulfil ourselves. This is not a condition but a process in which what is dark in us slowly becomes transparent'.[34]

There is a great temptation to quote Grotowski. I don't know anyone else who can speak about the theatre with such precision, who could search like that and question both himself and us. If I were to say which thought of Jerzy's... of Jurek's... of Boss' (these are the various ways we addressed him and spoke about him) is the most important for me, it would be the following words: 'Our entire body is one big memory. [...] The body does not *have* memory, it *is* memory. What you must do is unblock the *body-memory*'.[35]

Fundamentally, everything that I am saying here is to do with approaching this memory. Constructing a form, impulses, and a score of signs has become for me a basis for thinking about the actor's technique and I try to pass this on to my students.

Osterloff: Have you also accepted the theory of the 'total act' – the idea of an actor who sacrifices themselves to the spectators?[36]

Komorowska: You ask about the total act... Firstly, we would need to define what this is. If you read Grotowski's *Teksty z lat 1965–1969* carefully, it is possible to understand this notion, not through a single quotation, but in a wider context. What Ryszard Cieślak did in *The Constant Prince* was the total act, the sacrifice of himself, and without it

[29] The book contains Jerzy Grotowski's texts as well as articles by Konstanty Puzyna, Tadeusz Burzyński, and Zbigniew Osiński in the appendix. See Jerzy Grotowski, *Teksty z lat 1965-1969. Wybór*, ed. by Janusz Degler and Zbigniew Osiński (Wrocław: Wiedza o Kulturze, 1989; expanded edition 1990). Eds.

[30] Jerzy Grotowski, 'Towards a Poor Theatre', in Grotowski, *Towards a Poor Theatre*, ed. by Eugenio Barba (London: Methuen, 1968), pp. 15-25 (p. 17). Eds.

[31] See Grotowski, 'He Wasn't Entirely Himself', in *Towards a Poor Theatre*, pp. 85-93 (p. 89). Eds.

[32] This is a paraphrase from Grotowski's text 'Towards a Poor Theatre', p. 17. Eds.

[33] Ibid. Eds.

[34] Ibid., p. 21. Eds.

[35] Jerzy Grotowski, 'Exercises', trans. by James Slowiak, unpublished manuscript, pp. 164 and 165. Boss is an affectionate term for Grotowski used by his close collaborators. See Gardecka's and Mirecka's pieces for further comment on this. Eds.

[36] Grotowski stated in his Paris lectures in 1997 and 1998 that the actors should not make a sacrifice to the spectators but to something that transcends themselves. The recordings of the lectures are available under the title *La lignée organique au théâtre et dans le rituel* (The 'Organic Line' in Theatre and in Ritual) (Paris: Le Livre qui Parle, 1998; audio cassettes or mp3 CD). Eds.

there would be no *Prince*. The total act… it is difficult for me to speak about it.

Osterloff: Did you have any doubts?

Komorowska: Yes, from time to time.

Osterloff: What kind of doubts?

Komorowska: My life developed in such a way that I had a different hierarchy of the most important values. Instinctively, I felt that such a total sacrifice to theatre and to the spectators was impossible in my life. But I am saying: *in my life*. Although for the whole period of my stay in Opole and then in Wrocław I did try to prove both to myself and to Grotowski that it was possible to fit my decision to become a mother with the theatre, and I managed to reconcile both of these aspects for some years. But would it be possible for a longer period? Probably not. Also I think – and this is confirmed by theatre history – that such searches cannot last for long. Jerzy Grotowski spoke about it himself; he felt that he had to go beyond the theatre, and that was what he did.

Osterloff: You moved from the Teatr Laboratorium to the Teatr Współczesny (Contemporary Theatre) in Wrocław. In the 1960s, [the latter] was also one of the most interesting stages in the country. Is that why you chose this place?

Komorowska: I don't think I was aware of that. But there were some very important encounters for me that took place there. Above all an encounter with Jerzy Jarocki.[37]

TRANSLATED BY JUSTYNA DROBNIK-ROGERS

---

[37] Jerzy Jarocki (1929-2012) was one of the most acclaimed Polish theatre directors of the post-war era. He is especially famous for his performances of Polish contemporary drama (e.g. the plays of Tadeusz Różewicz, Sławomir Mrożek and Stanisław Ignacy Witkiewicz). Jarocki was also a pedagogue who taught directing at the drama school in Kraków. Trans.

The Madness of Benvolio

RYSZARD CIEŚLAK

RYSZARD CIEŚLAK (1937-1990), was one of the main actors of the Teatr Laboratorium. He joined the company in 1961 and worked there until the theatre's self-dissolution in 1984. He performed in each of the Laboratorium's performances, from his 1962 debut in *Kordian* onwards. Notably, Cieślak created the celebrated title role in *The Constant Prince* (1965) and the role of Ciemny (The Simpleton) in *Apocalypsis cum Figuris* (1968/69), and is considered to epitomise Grotowski's vision of the actor. His work on training was documented by Torgeir Wethal in the Odin Teatret film *Training at the 'Teatr Laboratorium' in Wroclaw* (1971). In the 1970s, Cieślak was one of the leaders of the company's paratheatrical projects. In 1977, he acted in Witold Leszczyński's film *Rekolekcje*. In 1981, he directed *Polish Thanatos* [*Thanatos polski*], a performance created collectively by several members of the Laboratorium. He led numerous workshops around the world, and in 1983 and 1984, he directed in Pontedera (Italy), Århus (Denmark), and Albacete (Spain). From 1985-1989 he collaborated with Peter Brook on the *Mahabharata*, playing the role of the blind king Dhritarashtra. In 1990 he directed *Ash-Wednesday* at New York University. He died of cancer on 15 June 1990 in Houston. In 1994, Krzysztof Domagalik made the posthumous documentary *Aktor całkowity* (The Total Actor) devoted to Cieślak and his work.

This text was originally published in Polish as 'Szaleństwo Benwolia', ed. by Zbigniew Jędrychowski, *Notatnik Teatralny*, 10 (1995), 40-47; a special issue devoted to Ryszard Cieślak. The piece was based on Konstantinos Themelis, *Rozmowa z Ryszardem Cieślakiem* (A Conversation with Ryszard Cieślak), with the collaboration of Vassilis Lagos, Athens, September 1986. It was transcribed by Bruno Chojak from an audio recording in the archive of the Grotowski Institute, Wrocław. The full version of the interview with Cieślak by Themelis was published in *Grotowski – Cieślak. Spojrzenia* (Grotowski/Cieślak: Perspectives), ed. by Małgorzata Leyko and Maciej Michalski (Kalisz: Miejska Biblioteka Publiczna, 2010), pp. 69-90.

My childhood was very difficult, as I am a war child. I was two when the war started. What do I remember? I remember fear all around; I remember my parents' fear. We had to hide and keep moving. At first, we were in a camp, and then we escaped with the whole family and found shelter in a monastery in Kraków. There we survived the war.

When the war ended, we returned to our hometown of Kalisz, which is one of the oldest towns in Poland. I started school there. Then I went to secondary school and did my *matura*.[1]

Some children already start to recite poems and so on during their childhood – but it was never like that for me. Quite the opposite. I would rather hide under the table. No poems. It was my sister who preferred to do that. My path to the theatre was quite unusual.

After the *matura*, I followed the herd and like my friends went to study at technical college. I had been studying for two years when I suddenly realised that it wasn't for me. I felt that I had to study; it was a kind of life compulsion, but nevertheless it did make sense to me. If I didn't study I would have been conscripted.

[1] The final secondary school exams in Poland. Trans.

Drawing by Jerzy Gurawski for *The Tragical History of Dr Faustus* (1963), with Gurawski's handwritten caption 'Faustus – action in the space'.

I was wondering what I could study and who I wanted to be. I thought of becoming a doctor or a psychiatrist. So, I applied to study medicine. In the meantime, I met some of my sister's friends who said to me: 'Listen, the exams for drama school are earlier than those for medicine. Why not try that?'

*

I was accepted for both. Which led to the next problem – what to choose? Being an actor or a doctor? In fact, my dream was to study film directing. In order to be a good director, I had to know what it meant to be an actor. So, I thought, I'll complete the acting course and then go on to study film directing in Łódź. I finished drama school.[2] I had some ups and downs while I was there. My little theatre rebellion began there, as I didn't agree with the tutors who were trying to teach me how they used to act when they were young. I was fighting for the opportunity to give something from myself. This was my first encounter with the truth, my own truth as an actor, my personal truth. This led to various problems, to the extent that I was even nearly expelled.
I wasn't a genius there, but let's say I functioned reasonably within certain restrictions, so I was allowed to stay… I didn't finish school but I met Jerzy Grotowski.

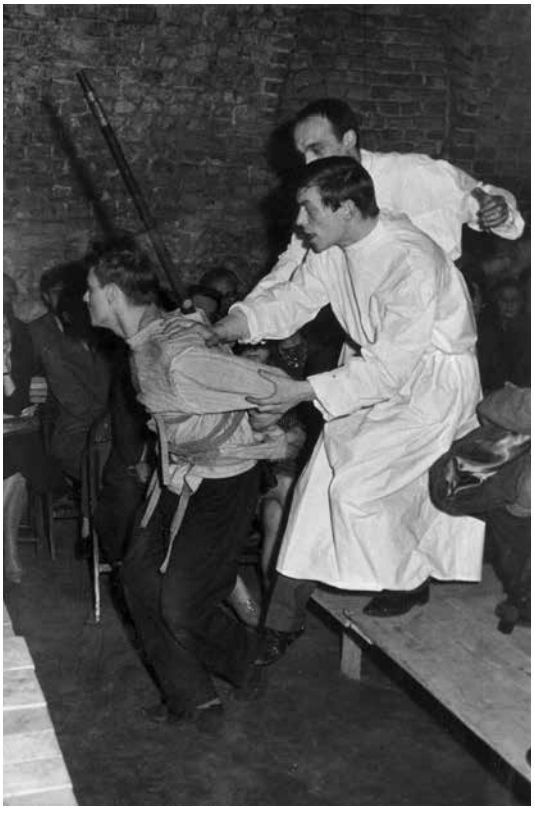
*

[2] Ryszard Cieślak literally said: 'I completed it'. The facts are not clear. Later in this section he says: 'I didn't finish school' and 'I got the diploma'. Cieślak was one of eight graduates of the Puppetry Department of the PWST (State Higher Theatre School) in Kraków in 1961. He took part in the final performance, but probably did not get a diploma (certificate of completion). Eds.

At drama school everyone was allowed to do their own small workshop alongside the compulsory student work. I decided to do something with a small group of people. Grotowski was teaching there in Kraków at that time. I was tinkering around with this [workshop] and Grotowski was assigned as my supervisor, which meant that he was to look after me. He said, 'Go off and do it and when you know what it will be, contact me'. I had been working very hard on it, and after all that, I was proud of my idea, so I went to Grotowski. 'Yes, it's very beautiful', he said, and then he changed everything completely, so I started to hate him. In the end, it was a small thing. I wanted to do a montage of love poetry and I imagined it in my own particular way. It was in 'pastel shades', because I was young then. But Grotowski already had fangs. Later, when I was in my final year, he appeared at the school with Ludwik Flaszen. This was because he had become a director of the theatre in Opole and was looking for actors. Grotowski remembered me because of this early project. He stopped me in the school corridor and asked whether I was free and would like to work in this… strange theatre. By that time, I had seen his first two performances, and wasn't much impressed. So I said to him that I might take such a risk once I'd got my diploma. But obviously, I still knew that I wanted to do the film directing course in Łódź after I finished school. At the same time, I thought that the drama school, like all schools around the world, hadn't really given or taught me very much. So, it made sense to stay in theatre at least for a year and see what it really means to be an actor, what it means to act properly, not just to work sporadically on various scenes and études like in drama school. But the answer I gave Grotowski was very ambiguous.

I got the diploma and suddenly I received a letter from Opole. This was amazing! The letter contained a contract signed by Grotowski. I carried this letter around for about two weeks, until one day I was partying with my friends into the early hours of the morning and when I went to a milk bar to have some milk and a buttered roll, I decided to sign the contract.[3] So I did and I put it in the letterbox by the railway station.

In Kraków I saw [the productions of] *Shakuntala* and *Cain*, which they [Grotowski's theatre] brought from Opole.[4]



From left: Zbigniew Cynkutis, Ryszard Cieślak, and Andrzej Bielski in Słowacki's *Kordian* (1962). Photograph: Edward Węglowski.

[3] A milk bar is a state-owned and -run canteen common during communist times, where inexpensive food could be purchased. Eds.

[4] *Shakuntala* after Kalidasa was presented as an erotic drama in two acts. It premiered in the Teatr 13 Rzędów on 13 December 1960. The Teatr 13 Rzędów visited Kraków from 8 to 15 January 1961, presenting *Shakuntala* and *Mystery Bouffe*. *Cain* was a grotesque or mystery play based loosely on the eponymous drama by Byron. It premiered on 30 January 1960. The theatre presented *Cain* as well as *Orpheus* in Kraków from

I have to say that I noticed something unusual in *Cain*. Despite the fact that the performance may not have appealed to me, there were certain ideas in it that, back then, I hadn't encountered before in any other theatre.

It is worth adding that the theatre elite of that period were evidently against Grotowski. That was why I couldn't make my decision straightaway whether or not I should go to these 'madmen' – as they were called: 'those madmen who do headstands when they perform!' I don't know why, but perhaps it's because I am a Pisces and I simply like taking risks. Risk has always followed me everywhere. I signed the contract because I thought that madness was better for me than conventional theatre. Just that. I signed the contract on the absolute understanding that I would stay there only for one year.

*

I arrived at Grotowski's theatre in Opole. It was small, without a stage, quite strange. We started working on *Kordian* by [Juliusz] Słowacki.[5] This was the first piece in which I took part. I had very small roles, comprised of various characters. I didn't know how to link them together and what to do with them. I had to climb up onto some beds; everything was complicated and very strange. Then, for the first time, Grotowski provided me with some real help. I suddenly realised that drama school hadn't taught me anything, that I had no voice – my voice was closed off. This was because of the teaching at the school, where they forced me to breathe in an unnatural way. I suddenly discovered all of my deficiencies and mistakes. This was my first encounter in work – in work with Grotowski.

Because I am an ambitious person, in a positive sense of the word, I thought that I couldn't leave until I had accomplished something.

Ryszard Cieślak in the Teatr Laboratorium's production of Wyspiański's *Akropolis* (1963).
Photograph: Teatr Laboratorium.

*

After *Kordian* we started working on *Akropolis*.[6] Although I still only performed small parts, work on *Akropolis* was really interesting. As a result, I extended my stay at the theatre. Basically, I believed that I hadn't accomplished anything yet. My resolution that I would do something and then leave didn't work out. So now I thought to myself: 'I will stay for another year in order to accomplish something, and then I'll go'.

---

1 to 4 March 1960. See Zbigniew Osiński, *Grotowski i jego Laboratorium* (Grotowski and his Laboratory) (Warsaw: Państwowy Instytut Wydawniczy, 1980), pp. 70 and 84. See also Zbigniew Osiński, *Grotowski and his Laboratory*, trans. and abridged by Lillian Vallee and Robert Findlay (New York: PAJ, 1986), pp. 39, 50, and 51. In this abridged version of the Polish book, most, though not all, details are mentioned. Eds.

[5] Premiered 13 February 1962. See 'Ryszard Cieślak (1937–1990). An Annotated Chronology of Life and Works' in *Notatnik Teatralny*, 10 (1995). This Chronology also contains more information about further Teatr Laboratorium premieres in which Cieślak performed.

[6] Premiered 10 October 1962.

*

During this first period, we didn't have any exercises. The exercises started when Grotowski returned from China [in 1962].

*

In *Dr Faustus,* I again played only small parts.[7] But with this play a very important breakthrough moment happened for me. I decided to go to Grotowski and tell him that I had an idea, and that I would like to connect various episodes through one character, and that this character would be very strange and opinionated. As a result, this character was called Benvolio.[8] Grotowski said: 'All right. Is this what you want to focus on?' (I cannot remember whether we already called each other by our first names or if we were still on formal terms). I said yes. And so we started working separately. After working with the whole group, he would work with me long into the night. And the group wasn't even aware of what I was doing. That was how my input began.

The performance was arranged in such a way that Faust would welcome his guests: there were tables, as in a refectory, and Faust would present episodes from his life. This took place on the tabletops as though dishes were being served up. The most important part was a scene entitled 'The Madness of Benvolio'. In this scene, when Benvolio was visited by demons, he would destroy all the tables. Each tabletop probably weighed about twenty-five kilos, since they were wooden and thick. I was tearing them off very quickly (and I had to be very careful because of the spectators sitting close by).

[Grotowski and I] worked on this and Grotowski worked with the group, and then he said to them: 'I want to show you something. Ryszard!' It was then that – for the first time – I felt something was starting to happen.

It was also then that Grotowski discovered my voice. He did something simple. He just showed me that I was breathing incorrectly, and said that I should take the foetal position and try to breathe like that. And then he asked me at first to make a single sound, then to sing. And I suddenly realised that the room was full of sound.

At that time, the group consisted of the following people: Rena Mirecka, Antoni Jahołkowski, Zbigniew Cynkutis, who was playing Faustus, Zygmunt Molik, Maja Komorowska, and Maciej Prus, who is now a director.

It turned out that during various activities at the Teatr Laboratorium – and this was probably good for me – I ended up breaking nearly all my bones. (When you are a pioneer, you take risks.) The first accident happened during *Dr Faustus*. Before Benvolio smashed up the tables, he did some kind of 'tiger leaps' – a moment of stillness and then a somersault. During one of these jumps, I placed my hand between the two tables and did a somersault. Four fingers got broken!

Later on, it was decided in Warsaw that a special cultural committee, which consisted of various prestigious personalities and academics, should decide whether or not this theatre should continue to exist.[9] We were to show a performance as well as our

[7] *The Tragical History of Dr Faustus* premiered on 23 April 1963.

[8] It is not entirely clear what Cieślak is referring to at this point but it must relate somehow to Benvolio's character as it appears in Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet* (1597) and his role as a benevolent peacemaker who asserts his views. Eds.

[9] See Zbigniew Osiński, *Grotowski and his Laboratory*, trans. and abridged by Lillian Vallee and Robert Findlay (New York: PAJ, 1986), pp. 77, 79, and 80. Eds.

training methods (by that time the training had begun). Although my hand was in plaster, 'there was no other option but to perform', I said. So I put on a black glove to hide the plaster. I did a test jump on the concrete floor and then we did the whole piece. My plaster broke into tiny pieces. I had to change it twice.

*

[Benvolio in *Faustus*].[10] Why do I talk about madness and demons? It was like an attempt to destroy my body, a bit like a kamikaze. There was *thanatos*, but no *caritas* whatsoever. There was no spirit in it. It was heading for destruction and towards a determination to do something at any price. This determination lacked any lightness; it was as heavy as a large animal fighting against something.
Slowly I started having doubts about wanting to leave this theatre.

*

We were playing *Faustus* in Łódź. At the same time, some kind of international festival was taking place in Warsaw, so Eugenio Barba brought some people to see us, and that is how our existence in the outside world began.[11] (Barba had already worked with us on *Akropolis*.)

*

An important transition for me was *Studium o Hamlecie* (Hamlet Study) by Stanisław Wyspiański. We presented this performance about ten times.[12] It was really a great piece, but people didn't understand it. Sometimes we had just four spectators in the room… When we had five this was a good number. At times there were just two. Nevertheless, we continued to perform.
Grotowski discovered something in me that was more than just physical strength. The search for something more subtle began. But this wasn't yet *The Constant Prince*.[13] No, no.

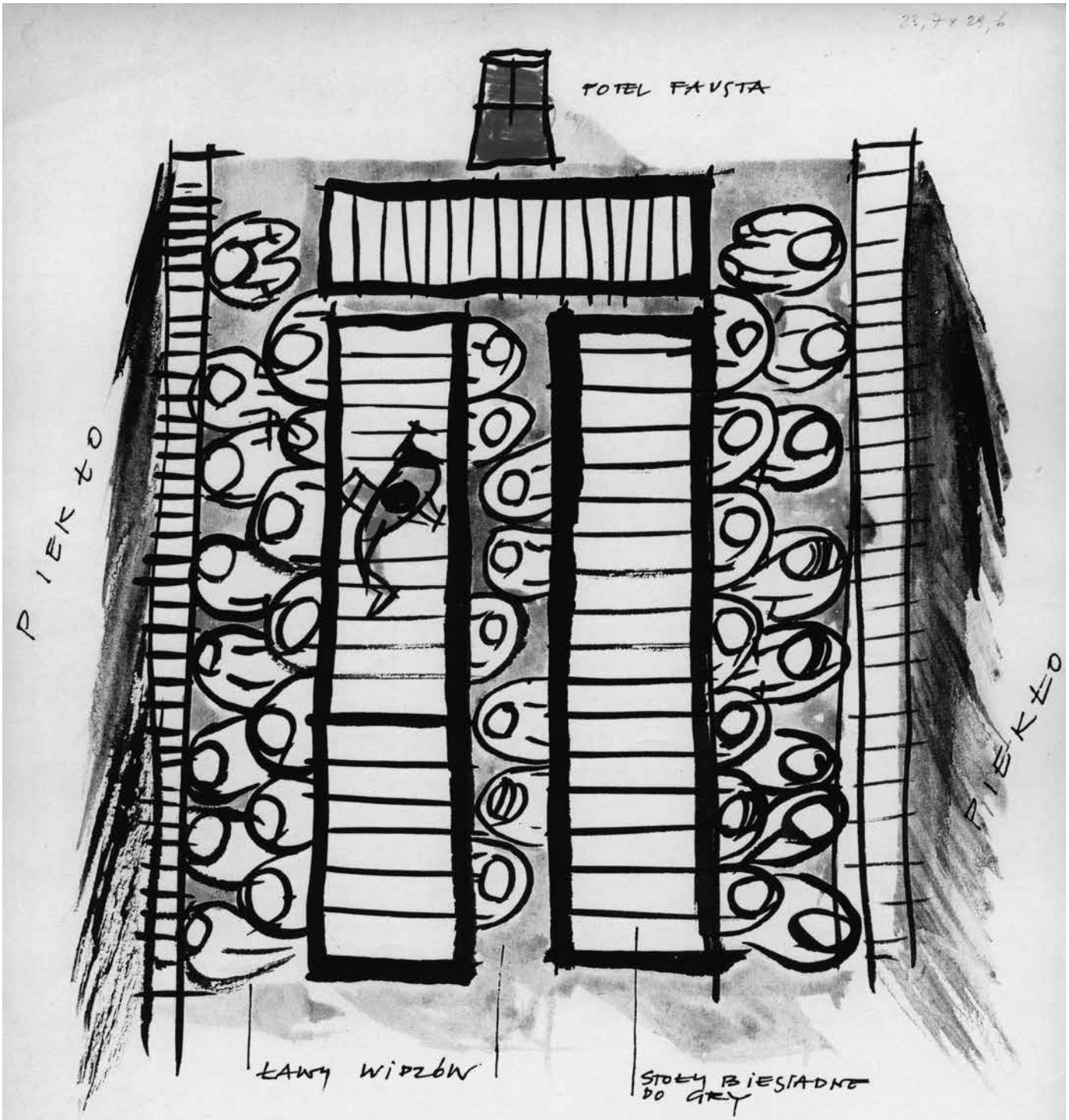
*

Now I need to move on to the *Prince*. One day Grotowski brought in the text of *The Constant Prince*, which he'd adapted. He didn't bring it to the group, but asked me to meet him in the café later that evening. He offered me the part. This surprised me. He said that it would be very, very difficult and that he imagined the ending of the performance with the Prince going into a real, live fire.
– Will you take this on, Mr Ryszard?
– But you're aware, Mister, that we'll be able to perform it only once? A few years later, I found out that when Grotowski told Flaszen that he was going to suggest this role to me, he replied: 'You're out of your mind. He's so wooden!' The work on the *Prince* started. It was very special work as Grotowski was working separately with me on all the monologues. The group did not take part in this; they didn't know what I was

Drawing by Jerzy Gurawski for *The Tragical History of Dr Faustus* (1963), with the handwritten caption 'Faustus – bird's eye view of the theatre space'. Additional notes indicate 'Faustus's armchair' (top), 'Hell' (left and right), 'Spectators' benches' (bottom left), and 'Dining tables for acting' (bottom right).

[10] The text in square brackets appears like this in the original Polish publication. Eds.
[11] The Teatr Laboratorium was in Łódź from 8 to 18 June 1963. Eugenio Barba was in Warsaw at the 10th Congress of the International Theatre Institute (ITI). This episode is described in a number of publications. See, for example, Zbigniew Osiński, *Grotowski and his Laboratory*, p. 76. Eds.
[12] Premiered 17 March 1964. See Zbigniew Osiński, 'Raporty kasowe Teatru Laboratorium 13 Rzędów. Opole 1964' (Box Office Reports from the Laboratory Theatre of the 13 Rows, Opole 1964), *Notatnik Teatralny*, 4 (1992), 81-83.
[13] *The Constant Prince* premiered on 20 April 1965.

23,7 x 29,6



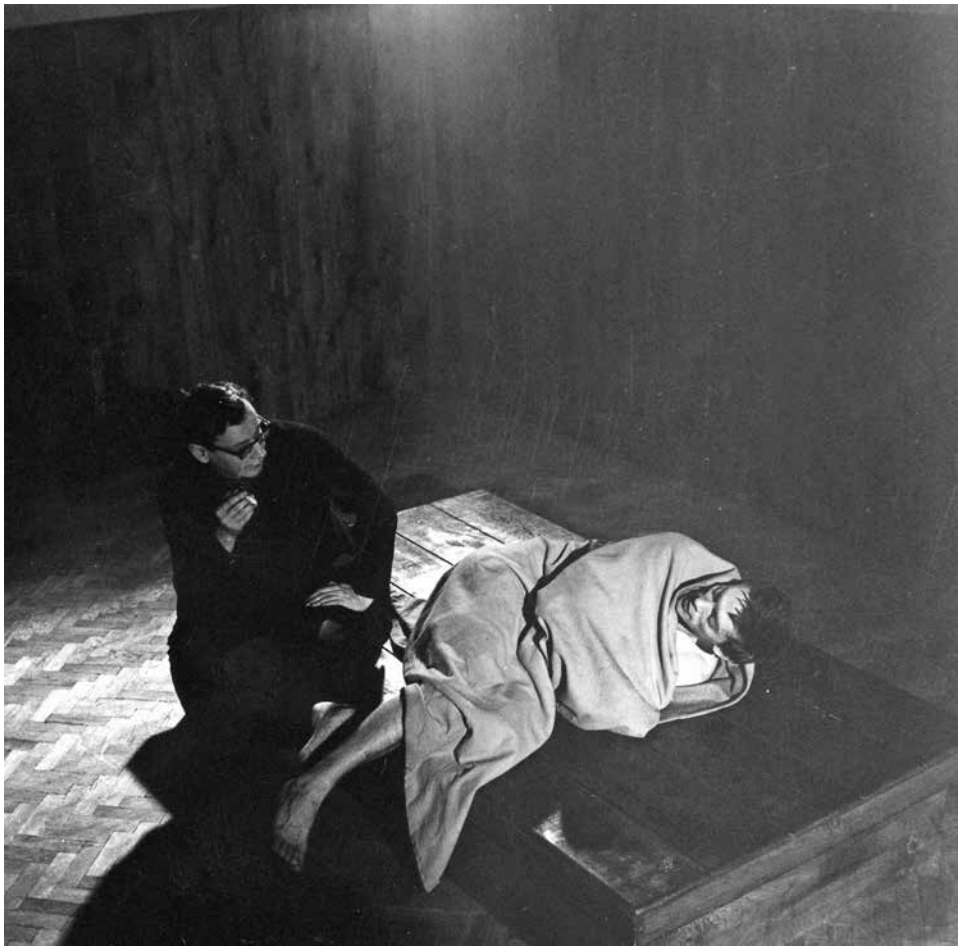
FAUST RZUT PRZESTRZENI TEATRALNEJ Z GÓRY

1962

up to. There were two streams of work. After a long time, Grotowski collided these two strands. It was great because the group had to react automatically and in the moment. If there was great astonishment, it was an astonishment that was honest, an absolutely honest reaction.

Work on the *Prince* changed my life and my worldview. Everything that I had said before had been uptight and fearful. And with this production, I suddenly realised that there is nothing to be afraid of, that everyone is as they are, and that there is no need to change ourselves completely, because we are good.

The two of us often worked through the night, in silence. I remember one such night. It was New Year's Eve.[14] Everyone else was having fun partying, but Grotowski and I worked for eight or nine hours, with him saying not a word. (He never said to me: 'Let's start Ryszard!' He could sit there in silence for hours, almost motionlessly so as not to disturb me with the slightest noise.) I was improvising some words, because at that stage I wasn't using the text. Only at the very end did Grotowski ask whether I remembered anything, tell me what I should remember, and remind me of my spontaneous utterances.



Jerzy Grotowski and Ryszard Cieślak during rehearsals for *The Constant Prince* (1965).
Photograph: Marek Czudowski, CAF/PAP.

Grotowski did not want me to learn the text by heart, but rather just to read it over and over again until it was memorised. The more the script was read, the more that the fragments were remembered and incorporated into the performance. What I was remembering was what was really essential and truly important for me.

We found it together. Without Grotowski sitting in the corner as an 'outside eye', I wouldn't have been able to do it. Between us there was a kind of 'voltaic arc' – as we approached it, the light appeared.

*

The last monologue in the *Prince* was, or rather became – and I don't like this word – 'the famous' monologue described by the critics. But the fact is that the spectators were reacting to it as though it was something special: 'Yes, he talks about death, he

[14] Cieślak is referring here to 31 December 1964.

dies, but this is a very strange death, cheerful, and delicate, the kind of death that illuminates'.

The last monologue is the dying monologue of the Prince. I was searching for a way to speak about the death that was to come, I was searching for this through the experience of the first real love of my life. At first, there is the fear of even touching another person and then there is the feeling of… flying up to heaven!

The two things clashing – Eros and Thanatos – provided a real explosion. It is a little complicated psychologically and from the outside could seem like a kind of trance. It is very difficult to explain this phenomenon. I need to start by explaining that everyone has a small 'control point' in their brain, just a tiny spot. I will give a real example: with her first child a mother becomes very tired. The child cries all night, the mother doesn't sleep. At last the child falls asleep and the mother can fall asleep too, despite the unimaginable noise around her and maybe the bombs that are exploding. But when the child starts whimpering, she immediately gets up. This is that control point, which is paying total attention.

Of course, this phenomenon had its particular structure (but if there was only a structure, it would be dry) and every time there was a total focus, an entering inside. It wasn't born straightaway; it took months for 'the unconscious to start to become conscious'.

*

The work on the *Prince* gave me real knowledge about my body.

*

The period of the *Prince* was the period of the father. Grotowski, the father.

*

There were many twists and turns with *Apocalypsis*. It started with Grotowski planning to do *Samuel Zborowski* (1845), an unfinished play by Słowacki and a difficult play to stage. The text as well as the set (a huge cross) was already prepared. We started rehearsing and it was truly a collective work, arising out of an awareness of what might be possible after the *Prince*. But one day, Grotowski, despite the fact that he had been working on *Samuel Zborowski* for nine months, just said: 'I see that this is going in a different direction' (and this was Grotowski to a tee, this was what made him great).[15] So, we started working on something that was called *Ewangelie* (The Gospels). We already had an international group of apprentices and they were also taking part in our quest. *Ewangelie* was finished as a piece and was performed just once, for friends.[16] Then, Grotowski and I were invited to lead a training session at New York University.[17] When the work started, I noticed that Grotowski was strangely unsettled in New York. One day he said to me that even though *Ewangelie* was finished, we 'would start everything from scratch' when we got back to Poland.

---

[15] See Jerzy Grotowski, 'On the Genesis of Apocalypsis', trans. by Kris Salata, *Re-Reading Grotowski*, ed. by Kris Salata and Lisa Wolford Wylam (=*TDR: The Drama Review*, 52.2 (2008)), 40-51. See also the interviews elsewhere in this volume with Stanisław Scierski (pp. 91-94) and with Teo Spychalski (especially pp. 151-54). Eds.

[16] An open viewing on 20 March 1967.

[17] Their stay in New York was from 6 to 30 November 1967. [This was at NYU, organised through Richard Schechner. Eds.]

This path towards *Apocalypsis* that led us through *Ewangelie* and *Samuel Zborowski* was something very important. When we returned to Poland, Grotowski announced this 'Job's message' to the group. Everyone broke down completely. We started working on something unknown. Until one day, Grotowski said that this should not go towards *Ewangelie* and the life of Christ as previously intended, but towards Christ's return to earth. At that point we still didn't have a title.

But we had an idea. The work together began. We had about seven hours of different ideas for *Apocalypsis*, but we didn't yet have any texts – apart from a range of very short pieces that we ourselves had come up with. One day Grotowski put all this in order and we showed it as a performance that lasted for about seven hours and twenty-five minutes. A wealth of material. Grotowski was selecting and putting it together in the manner of a montage, as if it were a kind of filmmaking: 'This can't stay in, this is rubbish, this is good…' We lost a few great scenes that didn't have any logic. Then we started looking for texts. Grotowski said that everyone should try to find something according to their feelings [about the work]. Antoś [Antoni Jahołkowski] found the famous [fragments from] Dostoevsky. With Grotowski's help, I discovered the Eliot. The other texts included Simone Weil and the Bible. And that was how *Apocalypsis* came about.[18] It was a breakthrough moment for our whole group, in the same way that the *Prince* had been a breakthrough for me earlier.

*

[A piece of advice for the young actor who would like to follow in our footsteps.][19]

It should be a *via negativa*. One should avoid copying Grotowski's aesthetics. One should avoid copying what I was doing – I have seen people doing that. This was truly mine. It is crucial to try – whatever the cost – to ask yourself the question of how to be honest. This is the priority: to be honest in your work.

Everything didn't always go well at the Teatr Laboratorium. We had moments of breakdown. I had moments when I wanted to leave, even during the good days.

It is very easy to say to yourself: 'This is difficult and I can't do it'. This is death. Trying means to live. Apart from that – and it is hardest when you are looking for the way – it takes time to find this and no one can teach you how to do it. It has to come of its own accord.

At the Teatr Laboratorium we didn't work like actors who go on stage. We worked like miners.[20] I don't regret it. If I were to start again, I would do the same thing.

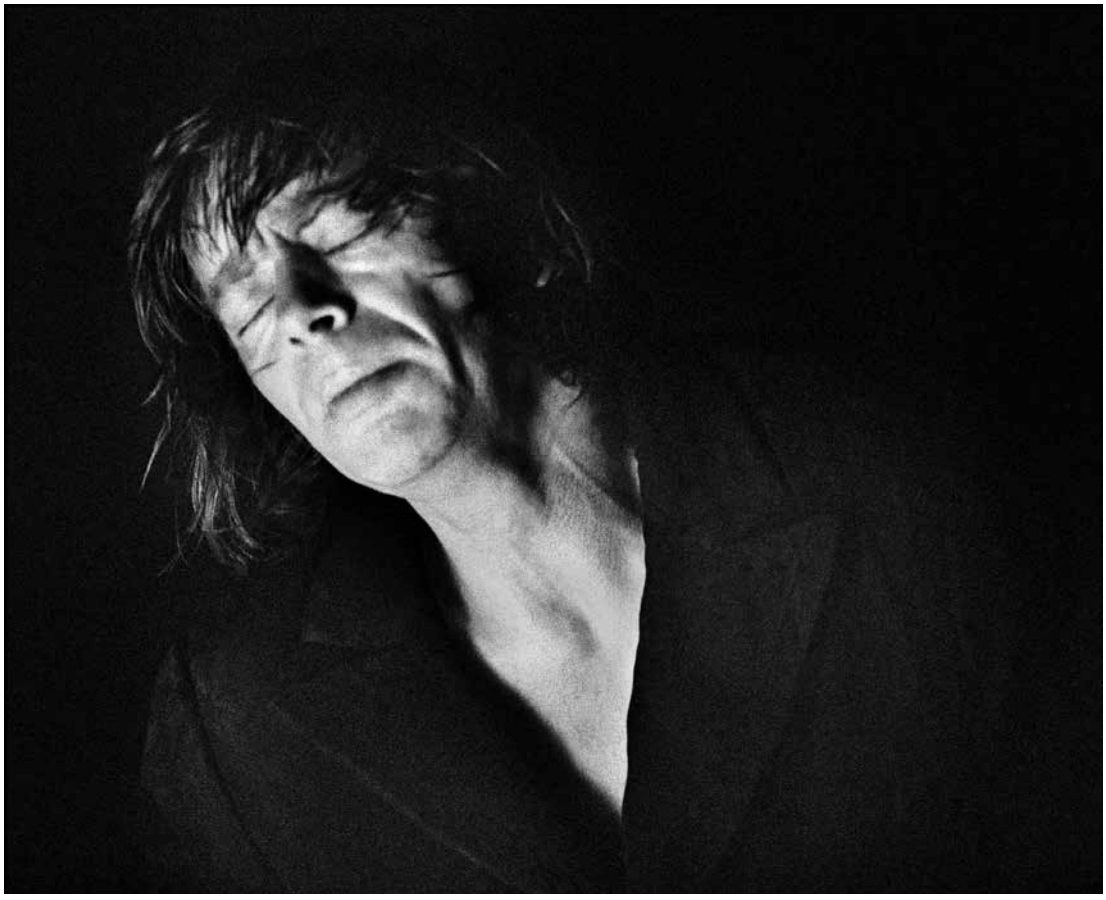
*

Now that the Teatr Laboratorium no longer exists and Grotowski is a long way away, I need to mention two things. I don't want to speak only about the encounter with

[18] [Closed] Premiere: 15 July 1968. [An official premiere took place on 11 February 1969. Eds.]

[19] The text in square brackets appears like this in the original Polish publication. Eds.

[20] In November 1983, on the occasion of the workshop *Labirinti* (Labyrinths), Cieślak, with Simona Morini, wrote and published an article entitled 'Minatori' (Miners) in Italy in 1984 in *Teatro Polacco: identità di una cultura. Progetto di studi e cultura teatrale* (Polish Theatre – its Cultural Identity: A Theatre Studies and Theatre Culture Project), (Bologna: Assessorato alla Cultura di Comune di Bologna – Centro Teatrale Roselle, 1984), pp. 24-26. The text was published in Poland as 'Górnicy', trans. by Anna Górka, *Didaskalia*, 73-74 (2006), 98-99, and reprinted in *Świadomość teatru: Polska myśl teatralna drugiej połowy XX wieku* (Awareness of the Theatre: Polish Thinking about Theatre in the Second Half of the Twentieth Century), ed. by Wojciech Dudzik (Warsaw: PWN, 2007), pp. 402-06.



Ryszard Cieślak in *Apocalypsis cum Figuris* (1979). Photograph: Maurizio Buscarino.

him, but also about how I feel about him, despite the fact that he is far away in the United States and I am in France, Italy, or in Poland.[21] Wherever I am, I always feel the presence of this man very strongly. And if I have any problems, he is the first person I think about. This helps. That's not all; a few times during our meetings he told me: 'Listen, you have had some problems recently'. 'How do you know? You weren't here', I asked. 'But I felt it', he replied.

To me, Grotowski is a very important person who gave me, I don't know, almost everything in my life. He is one of those people I can ask about everything and I believe that whatever he advises me is right and true. He doesn't give advice simply to get rid of you. If he doesn't have an answer, he asks for one day. Then he comes back with a piece of advice that is absolutely to the point.

At the beginning Grotowski was my director. Then he was a father who taught his child his first steps. And later? He remains my brother to this day.

TRANSLATED BY JUSTYNA DROBNIK-ROGERS

[21] In August 1986, Grotowski moved with three assistants (Pablo Jiménez, Thomas Richards, and James Slowiak) from California to Pontedera in Italy. Eds.

Notebook—Diary

ZBIGNIEW CYNKUTIS

ZBIGNIEW CYNKUTIS (1938-1987) was an actor, director, and pedagogue. Prior to joining the Teatr Laboratorium (Laboratory Theatre) in 1961, he had worked as an actor in Łódź (1960) and at the Teatr Ziemi Opolskiej (Theatre of the Opole Region) in Opole (1961). Cynkutis was a principal member of the Teatr Laboratorium until its voluntary dissolution in 1984, apart from a period in 1964 to 1966 when he worked at the Teatr Powszechny (Popular Theatre) in Łódź. He created the title role in the Laboratorium production of *The Tragical History of Dr Faustus* (1963) and the role of Lazarus in *Apocalypsis cum Figuris* (1968/69). In 1973, he directed the theatre event *Jałowa* (Wasted) based on Federico García Lorca's *Yerma* at the Osterwa Theatre in Lublin with his Laboratorium colleague Rena Mirecka among the cast. In 1976, he directed *Peer Gynt* at the Teatr Współczesny (Contemporary Theatre) in Wrocław. He taught internationally, mainly in the United States and Germany, and co-created the project *Tree of People* [*Drzewo ludzi*] (1979). From 1978 to 1980, he was vice-director of the Teatr Laboratorium. He founded and directed the Drugie Studio Wrocławskie (Second Wrocław Studio) in the former Laboratorium premises in 1985. Cynkutis died in a car accident on 9 January 1987.

This text is edited from Cynkutis' notes from December 1966, and was originally published as 'Notatnik-pamiętnik', ed. by Zbigniew Jędrychowski, *Notatnik Teatralny*, 20–21 (2000), 167-74.

Several loose, meticulously annotated sheets of paper, numbered pages, without a title, without a date – this much we can say on first glimpsing Zbigniew Cynkutis' previously unknown manuscript. Regarding the title – it is easy to establish this after reading the texts; thus we have the 'Notebook-Diary', written by the twenty-eight year-old actor in 1966 – most likely in December, following his arrival in Wrocław.

This 'Notebook-Diary' – probably written in private, almost as if with a clause prohibiting its use – is published here in extensive fragments, omitting those sections that are of an entirely private nature. This 'censorship' in no way decreases the informative value of the text, which could be considered an unusually honest testimony to the madness of the actor – who was entrusted with the title role in *The Tragical History of Dr Faustus* on the Opole stage of the Teatr Laboratorium 13 Rzędów (Laboratory Theatre of the 13 Rows).

The rehearsals, which began at the end of November 1962, were sometimes 'slightly reminiscent of a session at a psychoanalyst's'. Later, 'Grotowski began to work with each [actor] individually'. The premiere took place on 23 April 1963. Earlier, the editors of [the journal] *Pamiętnik Teatralny* had seen a rehearsal where scenes had been run through, and in June there were guest performances in Łódź. Thanks to Eugenio Barba, the Łódź *Faustus* was seen by an eminent group of critics and artists from abroad.[1] Thus, there was at least a 'European premiere'. *Faustus* 'was deemed the most

Zbigniew Cynkutis in 1959. Photograph: Zofia Nasierowska.

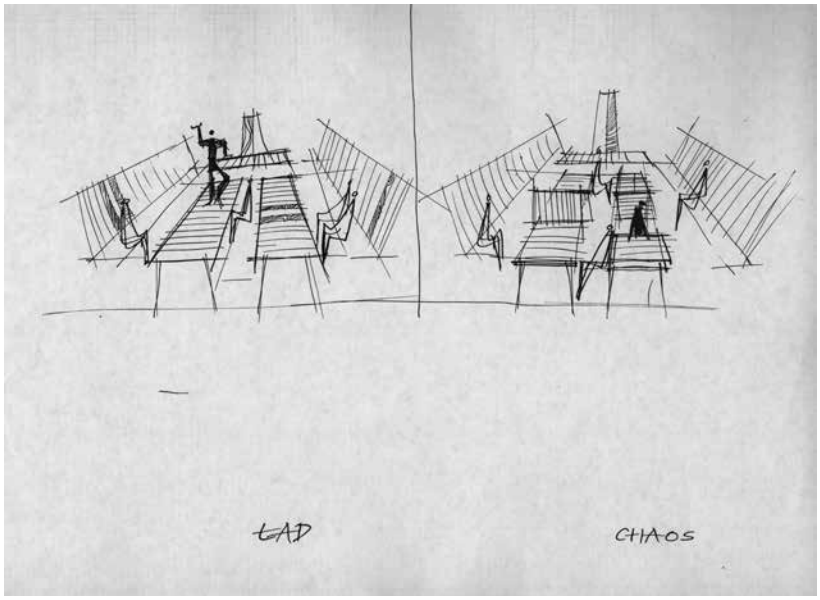
[1] This episode is described in a number of publications. See, for example, Zbigniew Osiński, *Grotowski and his Laboratory*, trans. and abridged by Lillian Vallee and Robert Findlay (New York: PAJ, 1986), p. 76. Trans.

outstanding avant-garde performance in the world'. Episodes from the life of Faustus were viewed in twenty-two scenes – [Faustus'] holiness (theological studies) becomes sin, and his sin (magic) holiness. 'The actor playing Faustus – was young, fresh, immaculate'. And, as the critics noted, he created an exceptional role.
Cynkutis' notes do not address this success; they do not even mention it. Rather, they show the path that the actor-human – 'attacked' by the role of Faustus – underwent, and in what 'dramatic and still imperfect manner' – through the process of unblocking and the penetration of the most intimate spheres of the actor's life, leading him to a 'trance' during the performance – the 'act laid bare' was pursued in the creation of the role.
'Notebook-Diary' might be read, as it were, as yet another scene from Faustus' confession. Thanks to this, the reasons for both Cynkutis' departure from Grotowski in Opole and his return to [the theatre's new location in] Wrocław become apparent.
Let us recall for the first time in this short introductory word a fragment from the Notebook…: 'The work on *Faustus* was a new method that Grot used on me'.

Z. J. [ZBIGNIEW JĘDRYCHOWSKI, EDITOR OF THE ORIGINAL POLISH TEXT]

In the recent years of my work as an actor – which have been abundant in partial successes, authentic defeats, and characterised by increasing discontent with myself as well as a swell of aggressive rebellion against the way of working at the Teatr Powszechny in Łódź,[2] […] – towards the end of the 1965/66 season I was faced with the problem: what to do next? […][3]
Twenty-eight years old is not yet the age of 'slippers'; I wouldn't want my visions of the mission given to me by this profession to be completely castrated. I'm the type of person who needs to be in the thick of things – I dislike quietude, I am drawn to the fight. [But] it could be a big mistake to get up to fight without being fully aware of the enemy's strategy and strength. […]
The summer of 1966 arrived, and I went with my family to the seaside, where I received a telegram from Grotowski proposing that we meet up in Międzyzdroje. It was a six-hour long, entirely honest conversation. Two days later Boss visited us in Pobierowo, where we worked out a provisional agreement regarding me taking a job at the '*trzynaście rzędów*' (13 Rows) in Wrocław.[4] I was fully aware of all the pros and cons of such a return; however, it was a real 'lifeline' for me. The mere thought that it could happen made me feel much better. Does this mean that I had doubted the possibility of encountering Boss in his theatre again? A bit, yes. I prefer to note down these doubts since the events of recent years are already fading in my memory, overshadowed by a commentary that I – not always truthfully – have built up around them […]; what will remain of these facts in a dozen or so years?

[2] Having left the Teatr 13 Rzędów in Opole, Cynkutis joined the Teatr Powszechny in Łódź. He was not particularly successful there and the unfavourable reception of his role as Gustaw in *Dziady* (Forefathers' Eve) certainly influenced his decision to return to Grotowski. Cynkutis submitted the request to terminate his contract with the Teatr Powszechny on 14 November 1966. Even though the contract was valid until the end of the year, Cynkutis joined rehearsals of the Teatr Laboratorium in Wrocław at the beginning of December.
[3] All cuts in the text are by the editor of the original Polish publication. Eds.
[4] 'Boss' was an affectionate term for Grotowski used by his close collaborators. See the pieces in this volume by Gardecka and Mirecka for further comment on this. Eds.



Drawing by Jerzy Gurawski for *The Tragical History of Dr Faustus* (1963): 'Order' (left) and 'Chaos' (right).

Filled with a lack of faith (I greatly regret that I wasn't instructed in the Catholic worldview, for often it would be an excellent escape from the cruelty of life's reality), full of suspicion about myths and biased interpretations of historical events, I draw a subversive joy from the possibility of finding essentially human features in each momentous phenomenon, which brings them closer to me and makes it easier for me to have personal feelings about them.

Grotowski's theatre certainly already deserves a place in the world's history of art; it will prompt many publications, many people will earn decent money for publishing their memoirs of This man and His work. Among them will be many enemies from the Institute's period of existence, who will suddenly turn out to be the most faithful friends – but apart from the 'hangers-on', there will also be those who wish to transmit the most faithful image possible about the Company's work, and that of its Chief.[5] I don't want to diminish the phenomenon that begins and ends with Grotowski, neither do I want to push its importance. I write these words with no intention of using them, though I don't know if this sentiment will become a principle. As I start this notebook I am driven by my own interest – I will use it to record my memories [...]. To do so, I will draw on the memory of 1961-1963 when I worked at Grot's in Opole, his letters to me from the time of our separation,[6] the letters of other colleagues from the Company, as well as my current impressions: i.e. since our recent encounter on 1 December 1966 in Wrocław, where the former Opole theatre – Teatr Laboratorium '13 Rzędów' – lost its rows and exists under the name Instytut Badań Metody Aktorskiej Teatr Laboratorium, with Jerzy Grotowski as director and artistic manager, and Ludwik Flaszen as literary director. [...]

I'd like to begin from my parting with Boss in winter 1963. The Theatre's situation – precarious as ever – was particularly shaky that winter. Various people who, for different reasons, didn't like the institution and tried to have [it] shut down many times, used all kinds of underhand schemes: from undermining its artistic values to administrative financial pressures to ideological slurs.[7] We were doing the last performances

[5] The 'Institute' here is the Instytut Badań Metody Aktorskiej Teatr Laboratorium (Institute for Studies of the Acting Method – Laboratory Theatre). Trans.

[6] Jerzy Grotowski, 'Listy do Zbigniewa Cynkutisa' (Letters to Zbigniew Cynkutis, six letters from 1964 and 1966), ed. by Zbigniew Jędrychowski, *Notatnik Teatralny*, 20-21 (2000), 157-66.

[7] Zbigniew Osiński wrote at length about the relationship of the Party and voivodeship [a large administrative district] authorities to Grotowski's theatre, in his *Teatr '13 Rzędów' i Teatr Laboratorium '13 Rzędów'. Opole 1959-1964. Kronika-Bibliografia* (The Theatre of '13 Rows' and the Laboratory Theatre of '13 Rows', Opole 1959-1964: A Chronicle-Bibliography) (Opole: Galeria Sztuki Współczesnej w Opolu, Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Opolskiego, 1997). [He considers] the Opole critics' lack of interest in the performances of this theatre and [also] the voices of critics throughout Poland, which were often biased against Opole's 'professional, experimental theatre'.

of *The Tragical History of Dr Faustus* by Marlowe and were starting rehearsals for *Studium o Hamlecie* (Hamlet Study), after Shakespeare and Wyspiański.

[…] The work on *Faustus* was a new method that Grot used on me – he prompted me with my most intimate associations, both of us worked for hours on end, I encountered resistances and overcoming them wasn't easy and required time. For instance, the last scene, when Faustus makes his final attempt to attain the truth, and the Devil takes his soul after their pact has expired – Boss decided to create it as a state of the utmost ecstasy.[8] We understood each other without words; rarely were whole sentences uttered during rehearsals – I sensed intuitively what kinds of propositions he expected from me. […] I knew what stimulated the creative process within Him in the most vigorous way […]

Grot himself, and here I fully agree with him, justifies the use of [erotic] associations in artistic work by saying that this is the domain of the actor's strongest sensations, through which the creative process can be liberated and through which a score of actions – where the composition of signs will in the end not resemble an erotic situation at all – can subsequently be established. However, carried by an erotic impulse, this will appeal to the spectator's own associations related to this area, and, beyond all rationality, stir in them images, feelings, and very intimate psychic states. At this moment the essence of the performance will come into being: that is, a spark jumping between the actor and the spectator.[9] And here I come back to *Faustus*. I proposed an étude that was constructed using an exceptionally strong impulse. […] This shot hit the mark; however, when the impulse became subdued and the normal awareness of a human – which of course I am – fell back into place, I felt humiliated and ashamed. And what was so wonderful was that Grotowski displayed a simply extraordinary respect when faced with this almost exhibitionist incident. His silence, warm seriousness, and something like love towards me allowed me to recreate the whole étude – this time consciously making my bodily reactions happen, with the aim of establishing the score of actions. […]

I am describing this only in order to know roughly how I approached the dozen or so scenes in the performance, three of which were characterised by a similar level of

---

[8] This was scene twenty-two, which Eugenio Barba described as follows: 'He is in a rapture, his body is shaken by spasms. The ecstatic failure of his voice becomes at the moment of his Passion a series of inarticulate cries – the piercing, pitiable shrieks of an animal caught in a trap. His body shudders, and then all is silence'. Eugenio Barba: 'Dr Faustus: Textual Montage' in Jerzy Grotowski, *Towards a Poor Theatre*, ed. by Eugenio Barba (London: Methuen Drama, 1968), p. 77.-

[9] Grotowski wrote about the relationship between the actor (and the character) and the spectator in 1965, in the text, 'Aktor ogołocony' (The Actor Laid Bare): '[…] is to use the role as a trampoline, an instrument with which to study what is hidden behind our everyday mask – the innermost core of our personality – in order to sacrifice it, expose it. This is an excess not only for the actor but also for the audience. The spectator understands, consciously or unconsciously, that such an act is an invitation to him to do the same thing […]' Jerzy Grotowski, *Teksty z lat 1965-1969. Wybór*, ed. by Janusz Degler and Zbigniew Osiński (Wrocław: Wiedza o Kulturze, 1999), pp. 22-32 (p. 26). [In Grotowski, *Towards a Poor Theatre*, p. 37. Eds.]

Already in 1963, Eugenio Barba wrote about the actor in the Laboratory Theatre of the 13 Rows: '[…] the character serves [the actor] as an instrument to attack himself, to reach the secret depths of his personality, to lay bare everything that is most painful and intimate. It is a process of self-penetration, wounding and cruel, […]. By attacking the nerve centres of his psyche, by giving himself up entirely to this sacrifice, the actor, like the spectator who wishes to accompany him, goes beyond his alienation and his own limitations. […]'. See Barba, 'Le théâtre psycho-dynamique', in *Le Théâtre-Laboratoire 13 Rzędów d'Opole ou le théâtre comme auto-penetration collective*, limited circulation pamphlet (Opole, 1964).

psychic weight.[10] After this work I was spent. Even during the dress rehearsals for *Faustus* it wasn't clear when we would first confront the spectators; the performance was falling apart, I had many empty spaces – fragments connecting particular scenes – that I was still solving technically, which in turn disrupted the trance that was indispensable for the full realisation of the role. Grot would never let unfinished work be seen, and I think it was His inner discipline as an artist, rather than the fear of defeat, that brought about such principles. The last days of work – constant anxiety, sleepless nights, and the intense searching for the impulses within me that would give life to the dead elements of the performance – finally paid off. Another, perhaps the fourth, dress rehearsal put Grotowski at ease; I found the intention in the struggling connections. The premiere took place.

The next phase of work on the performance closed, and a new one opened – one in which people's presence created additional difficulties and provided new, previously unknown wake-up calls. I performed in the evenings. After each performance, according to our long-standing custom, Boss used to comment on it, giving each of us notes on what was good and on the bad elements that needed elaborating or fixing. He is someone who manages to combine the features of the most sensitive video camera with great-quality tape, and the most perfect audio recorder. He unerringly detected every departure from the established score! He even perceived a weakening of the intentionality of the action in a gesture that was insignificant for most people. After his notes, I would go back home where I often had trouble falling asleep, still 'living' the theatre. [...] Following such a night, sometimes I would try to deepen the work on *Faustus* – either in the form of exercises, correcting and going deeper into certain actions, or rectifying them so that in the evening the elements that had been worked on would be incorporated and tested out in the performance.

As I mentioned, I was psychically and physically deflated. A year was spent exploiting my strength for this performance, which brought me much joy but also a lot of bitterness. Domestically, things reached the point where [our] previous independence couldn't be maintained any longer. A small, one-bedroom flat, an inadequate wage, and increased costs made me think about returning to Łódź, where both of us had the support of our families and could count on their help.[11]

During a visit to Poznań to perform, my organism refused to obey for the first time in my life.[12] Nothing came without a cost; my first peptic ulcer attack signalled the impending danger. I performed despite the affliction, not wanting to disrupt the tour. Before the performances I carried out an intensive warm-up, not taking into account what could potentially happen. Once I'd attained a state of concentration on the task ahead of me, during the half-hour silence before the performance I was a healthy man again. However, in the morning the ulcers would return once more. A doctor advised me to change professions because the nervous tension of a life in act-

[10] Perhaps Cynkutis meant scenes eight (The Humiliation of Faust) and eleven (The Signing of the Pact). Eds.

[11] Cynkutis lived with his wife and young daughter in the Opole Actor's House at Sienkiewicza Street.

[12] *The Tragical History of Dr Faustus* was performed in Poznań in October 1963. [Eight performances, from 23 to 25 and from 27 to 31 October. Eds.]

ing would always cause the condition to return. Easy enough to say! All I could think about was eliminating any sources of unnecessary stress.

The work on *Faustus*, which was never finished until the final performance, led me to discover in myself many traits that I hadn't been aware of before. Through performing *Faustus,* I found a great deal of good and evil, weakness and strength within me. [...] I sensed the possibility of delving further within myself and was terrified at the thought. In the autumn of 1963, a state of being 'blocked off' grew within me, the fear of further exploitation in the role of being clay in God's hands. [...]

Something else strengthened my conviction that leaving would be a good thing: the town of Opole – small, provincial, where everyone knew each other, gossiped about others and hated theatre as such, where the '13 Rzędów' in particular was treated like the work of a madman. Sometimes there were just three or four spectators for *Akropolis*, *Faustus*, or – earlier – *Dziady* (Forefathers' Eve) or *Kordian*; and yet we would still perform. True enough, no one was despairing about this, but no one was particularly happy either. In such a situation, our trips to the major cities compensated us for these – psychic rather than financial – shortcomings; but now, thanks to the 'miraculous' measures being taken against the theatre, these were to be stopped. We were condemned to perform only in Opole, and to stew there until they disbanded us for good. [...]

TRANSLATED BY DUNCAN JAMIESON AND ADELA KARSZNIA

On the Bridge in Opole

WALDEMAR KRYGIER

WALDEMAR KRYGIER (1928-2006) was a painter, graphic designer, scenographer, and theatre director. He was co-founder of Teatr 38 in Kraków (1957). He collaborated with Jerzy Grotowski during the theatre of productions phase, designing posters, costumes, and props for the Teatr Laboratorium's performances, starting with *Dziady* in 1961. He directed Dostoevsky's *The Idiot* at the Teatr 13 Rzędów in Opole (1961). After he had completed his directing studies at Moscow's GITIS (1970), he became the artistic director of the Teatr Ludowy (People's Theatre) in Nowa Huta (1971-1974). He went on to direct in Koszalin, Zabrze, Kraków, Płock, and at Warsaw's Teatr Dramatyczny (Drama Theatre). His paintings, mainly portraits of popular Polish actors and composers, have been exhibited in the Zachęta National Gallery and at the National Philharmonic in Warsaw (1993).

This text was originally published as 'Na moście w Opolu', *Pamiętnik Teatralny*, 1-2 (2001), 157-62.

In this reminiscence, I would like to present 'my own understanding' of the situation in which I found myself after three years of working at Teatr 38 (Theatre 38) and almost ten years of collaboration with the Teatr 13 Rzędów and later the Teatr Laboratorium.[1]

I met Grot [Jerzy Grotowski] at the main train station in Kraków; his request to meet was passed on to me by Ludwik Flaszen, who introduced me as an outstanding scenographer. It was 1960 and I had just been sacked from Teatr 38, which I had founded (the stage there was the size of a large wardrobe – so it was difficult to spread your wings as a scenographer). Grotowski commissioned me to prepare the costumes for *Dziady* (Forefathers' Eve) and I felt immediately that something wasn't quite right. The scenography, needless to say, is the set and the costumes. And this is the understanding that I gained from Andrzej Stopka.[2] This 'something not quite right' had its consequences.

I had just worked on [Juliusz Słowacki's] *Samuel Zborowski* (it was my last premiere at Teatr 38), and now there was *Dziady*... I was a little bewildered.[3]

When I asked Flaszen about the stage, he answered: 'There isn't one – the action takes place in a living room. A small middle-class bash. And Gurawski is building what you could call the decor'.

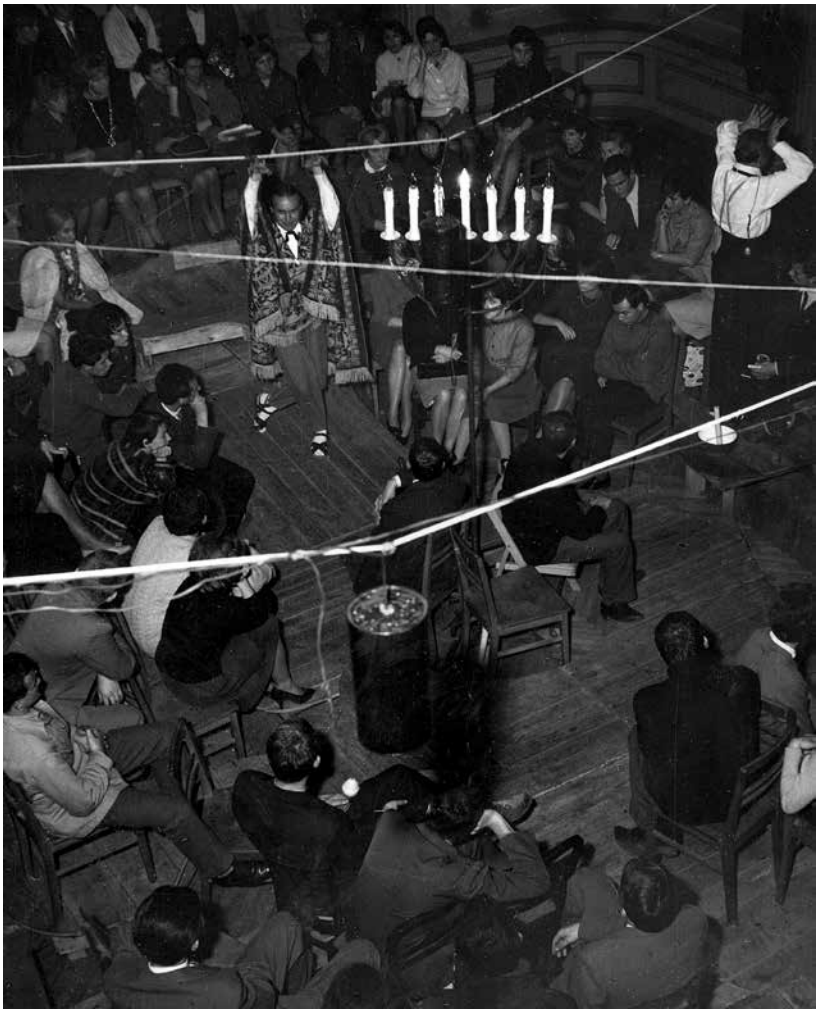
I had met the architect Jerzy Gurawski earlier on. I knew his great, final assignment for his degree: a stage design for [Stanisław] Wyspiański's plays. [...]

---

[1] Teatr 38, in the first phase of its activities, specialised in premiering new plays by Western European authors, previously unstaged in communist Poland. Eds.

[2] Andrzej Stopka (1904-1973) was a well-known Polish scenographer, painter and cartoonist. He created his own style known for incorporating folkloric elements. Stopka worked in many theatres, especially in Kraków. His most renowned work was created in collaboration with the famous Polish director, Kazimierz Dejmek, including *Noc Listopadowa* (November Night) and *Dziady*. Trans.

[3] The premiere of *Samuel Zborowski* directed by Waldemar Krygier took place on 10 March 1960 at Teatr 38.



Rena Mirecka, Zygmunt Molik (as Gustaw-Konrad), and Antoni Jahołkowski in Mickiewicz's *Forefathers' Eve* (1961). Photograph: Zdzisław Mozer.

On the whole, conversations with Grotowski were difficult. According to Grot's intention, the costumes were to be made of materials that could have been found in a middle-class home; so there were tablecloths, curtains, and covers. The characters were to be in a state of partial undress: the men were to wear trousers and shirts only, and the women underwired corsets. And because nobody in Opole had agreed to sew them, I had to do it myself. As a matter of fact, I had to sew the majority of costumes for the other plays as well.

I abandoned the conversations about the costumes because they were difficult. They irritated us both. I couldn't establish any boundaries. Was this to be – using the youth slang of that time – tomfoolery!? Was Grot treating *Dziady* seriously? (To me *Dziady* [the drama] was a parody by an offended youngster who wanted to enter into the history books of Russian literature, but who ended up being rejected by the local elites). And this is how Grotowski and I struggled, and I kept on drawing…

Zygmunt Molik's costume was the most challenging. He was meant to look blasphemous (when speaking the [text of the] Great Improvisation, he was to carry a broom). I drew it. 'Not that kind. This brings up associations with the cross.' Maybe a stick then? 'No, no! You use a stick to get at someone. It needs to be a brush.' So perhaps a brush made of rice straw? 'Draw it. Yes, that's good. Carry on, but don't put him in a shirt but in a tablecloth.' I drew it. 'No! This needs to be a special tablecloth.' Maybe a jacquard tablecloth? (I was lucky; the magic word must have worked on him.) 'Yes, draw it.' I said that there would be difficulties because the other characters were to be in tablecloths as well, but each was supposed to be different. Perhaps bedding? 'No! Nothing white! No bedding! And not modern trousers – they need to be from that period!'

That is how we used to blaspheme. It used to last a few hours each day. And I never did find out what Grotowski's *Dziady* was about. […]

And that is how I got to know Grotowski as a man of the theatre – from the perspective of the costumes. Grotowski used to give me orders. Actually, I didn't learn about any of the concepts of the adaptations. For instance, with *Hamlet* [*Studium o Hamlecie*] I received the instruction: 'Design habits and swords – as if they are real.' I asked

Production poster for *Forefathers' Eve* (1961), designed by Waldemar Krygier.

Antoni Jahołkowski in Dostoevsky's *The Idiot*, directed by Waldemar Krygier (1961).
Photograph: Ryszard Cieślak.

which order they should come from. Silence. Me: 'Franciscan or Dominican?' Grot: 'No, they should be undefined. Think of something.' Me: 'What about wooden swords?' Grot: 'No, they must be original!' Me: 'They will be heavy!' Grot: 'That's good.' I would attend rehearsals that lasted for hours.

Outside the theatre you couldn't talk about our work (at least not in the company of Grot). There was no point in protesting against this. I agreed with the situation – I had money (from designing the posters and from the sewing) and I had fun.

Grot didn't interfere with [my production of Dostoevsky's] *The Idiot*.[4] I was given a free hand. The costumes were sewn in Opole under my supervision. Beforehand, I prepared the designs and I gave them to Grotowski to sign off. There was no discussion about the Dostoevsky adaptation. I could talk to Grotowski about my troubles, but only outside of the theatre...

One day, Grotowski insisted that I design him some clothes. He dressed without any taste, so I suggested a black suit. He wore it until his death.

A long time before that, more or less when we were working on *Kordian*, very late in the evening after one of the rehearsals, Grot and I went out alone – as was his custom – to discuss a poster (I used to call them linographs as that is really what they were). I used to get special instructions regarding the posters, such as the size of the font. And as we walked through the streets of Opole, we found ourselves on a footbridge. The day was dawning. Grot stopped on this bridge and said: 'I am not a director. I want to be a philosopher, but in order to get to know the human being, in order to be able to find a response to the question of how to live and to define it into some kind of a system, to put everything in order – I realised that I am able to discover this through directing. I am discovering the author-human and the actor-human.'

This scene on the bridge made me feel very close to Grotowski. I realised what he was aiming at and what he wanted to achieve. I forgave him everything and for me, Grot became Great.

In the summer before I went to Moscow, we discussed *The Constant Prince* (even Gurawski was there). Grotowski made references to the political situation at the time. That is

[4] *Idiota* (The Idiot) based on Dostoevsky's novel was adapted and directed by Krygier in the Teatr 13 Rzędów in Opole in 1961. The premiere took place on 22 October and the role of Prince Myshkin was played by Zbigniew Cynkutis. Eds.

where the idea of the gowns for the prosecutors and barristers (with the appropriate colour for the trimmings) came from. Grot regarded everything that came from the outside as 'non-artistic'. Everything had to come from the artist, which in this case meant me. [...] In turn, Gurawski's idea [for the set] had associations with the playwright's Spanish origins. Gurawski suggested a *corrida* (a bullfight) and this was a very good solution. This adaptation allowed the actors to engage fully with their parts (obviously accepting Grotowski's analysis of the text). The rehearsals became very creative, but it didn't mean that they were any easier. They continued to last for many hours. I saw this as a consequence of our conversation 'on the bridge'. I also knew how the actors regarded the rehearsals, as they confided in me about them.

Every type of art, in this case the art of acting, defines itself through its matter (personality) – it sends information to its recipients. This information comes from the artist-actor's knowledge and consciousness, it is a defined philosophy (it responds to the question: how to live).

And on the seventh day...! Perhaps I'm exaggerating, but *Apocalypsis cum Figuris* – I'm convinced of this – became the full realisation of Grotowski's dreams from that bridge in Opole.

After my return from Moscow, during a conversation about the costumes (Gurawski wasn't there) Grotowski said to me: 'There will be nothing! Just a bare floor [parquet flooring], and you will do the costumes!' He showed me a photo in which there was a group of hippies getting off a plane. This was enough for me.

These were the only costumes that I designed that I didn't make myself. The theatre was already active in Wrocław; it was known throughout the world, it was rich. And Grot was so thin then. But consistent!

And the last page. Who was Grot for me?

During his final degree performance – *Hamlet* in Kraków – when Leszek Herdegen (Hamlet) spoke his famous monologue 'To be or not to be' to an empty half-litre bottle of vodka – Grot was an idiot.[5]

When he lectured on Hindi philosophy to a full audience (108 seats) and he spoke so beautifully about the strange world of gods, goddesses, and demons; and when later on he came for a cup of tea to the so-called *górka* (upstairs office) – he was

Scene from rehearsal for *Apocalypsis cum Figuris* in Milan in 1979.
Photograph: Maurizio Buscarino.

[5] Krygier is thinking here about *Bogowie deszczu* (The Gods of Rain) – a performance based on the play *Rodzina pechowców* (The Ill-Fated Family) directed by Grotowski at the Teatr Kameralny (Chamber Theatre) in Kraków. The performance, which premiered on 4 July 1958, included textual fragments by different authors, with Hamlet's monologue amongst them (delivered by Leszek Herdegen who played the character of Hubert). Grotowski writes about their collaboration in his article 'Leszek Herdegen – aktor publicystyczny' (Leszek Herdegen – the Journalistic Actor), *Współczesność*, 31 (16-31 December 1958), p. 8. Eds.

a wise man and I envied him.[6] And one day, after the lectures, a priest came to the *górka*. He introduced himself as a lecturer from the Jagiellonian University and said to Grot: 'My congratulations on your confabulation about Hinduism'. And I envied him even more then.

When we were already in Wrocław, experimental student theatre groups used to invite Grot along, and I thought to myself: how many followers he had and how easy it is to imitate him (his 'grotowskiness'), and of that I felt ashamed.

For me, Grot is and will remain the person 'from the footbridge in Opole'. His honesty is confirmed by his consistency and his confessions. I just don't understand his adoration of Ryszard Cieślak. This was an extreme submission and an unprecedented capitulation. Up until the moment when [the Laboratorium's administrator] Stefa [Stefania] Gardecka passed me a request from Grot to make a portrait of Stanisław Scierski;[7] I painted it.[8] Now it is at Gurawski's place. [...] What – in my opinion – was Grot's input into the theatre? Picasso 'allowed' artists to consider that all formal solutions are permitted and that neither convention nor technical skills exist. And Grot is understood by his imitators or those who continue his work as follows: a lack of moral and social responsibility and extreme cynicism or, in other words, anything goes.

Production poster for *Apocalypsis cum Figuris* (1969), designed by Waldemar Krygier.

TRANSLATED BY JUSTYNA DROBNIK-ROGERS

---

[6] In 1959 Jerzy Grotowski gave a dozen or so [sixteen] lectures on Hindi [and East Asian] philosophies in Teatr 38's space.

[7] Stanisław Scierski and I prepared *The Bible* at the theatre on 5 Św. Marek Street in Kraków. Scierski recited, among others, the Decalogue then. [The performance, directed by Krygier in the student theatre in Kraków, premiered on 8 June 1964. Krygier seems to be implying that this showed that Grotowski was still looking for a lead actor and that this was to be Scierski rather than Cieślak. Eds.]

[8] Krygier later also painted Grotowski's portrait, now in the Grotowski Institute's collection. Eds.

An Architect at the Teatr Laboratorium

JERZY GURAWSKI

JERZY GURAWSKI is an architect and scenographer, and a lecturer at the Technical University in Poznań. He collaborated with Jerzy Grotowski during the Theatre of Productions phase of the Teatr Laboratorium's work, beginning from *Shakuntala* in 1960. He later continued to collaborate with Zbigniew Cynkutis (*Phaedra*; Wrocław, 1987), Maciej Prus (*Lower Depths*; Warsaw, 1991), and Ludwik Flaszen (*The Demons*; Kraków, 1995). Gurawski moved from Opole to Poznań in 1974, after he and his colleague Marian Fikus won the design competition for the university campus of Morasko. In 1989, Gurawski founded his own studio and went on to design many prominent buildings, including Poznań's Mathematics-Informatics Faculty building (1999-2001) which won the Ministry of Construction's prize for the best construction built with public funds. In 1996, Mirosława Sikorska directed the documentary *Inicjały J.G.* (Initials J.G.) about Gurawski's collaboration with Grotowski for Polish TV Katowice.

This text was originally published as 'Architekt w Teatrze Laboratorium', *Dialog*, 5 (1984), 97-100, and was reprinted in *Teatr w miejscach nieteatralnych* (Theatre in Non-theatrical Places), ed. by Juliusz Tyszka (Poznań: Wydawnictwo Fundacji Humaniora, 1998), pp. 105-10.

In June last year I was invited as a former collaborator of the Teatr Laboratorium to Santarcangelo, a small village in Italy. I was to give a paper on my theatrical activity at a seminar on the theatre of Jerzy Grotowski and Peter Brook, which was wonderfully titled *Utopia del laboratorio* (The Utopia of the Laboratory).[1]

In order to prepare for this paper, I had to dig out some old sketches, plans, and notes full of lofty thoughts and manifestos. I had to recall that atmosphere from almost a quarter of a century ago, from the 1950s and the beginning of the 1960s, and the city of Kraków at a time before its industrialisation – then a wonderful, old, and dying city.

It was a time when the theatres in Kraków were flourishing, especially student and so-called 'avant-garde' theatres. There was the then-famous Teatr 38 led by Waldemar Krygier, Tadeusz Kantor's Cricot 2 was still performing on Łobzowska Street, and, in its youthfulness, the Piwnica Pod Baranami (Cellar under the Sign of the Rams) was blossoming. There was Kotlarczyk's Teatr Rapsodyczny (Rhapsodic Theatre)[2] and Józef Szajna, the future Titan of the theatre, was starting his scenographic work in Nowa Huta.[3] It was impossible to live and study in Kraków in those years and not have some interest in the theatre.

The first symptom of the 'reciprocity' of these interests was the award that I received during my student years (1959) for the design of a touring theatre from the Mazowsze District. A conversation with the judges of this competition – especially with

[1] The symposium was organised by Istituto di Cultura Teatrale and Emilia Romagna Teatro on 9–11 June 1983. Eds.

[2] See 'A Word about Poor Theatre' elsewhere in the volume, p. 25, n. 37. Eds.

[3] A large industrial steel town just outside Kraków, and currently its largest district. Trans.

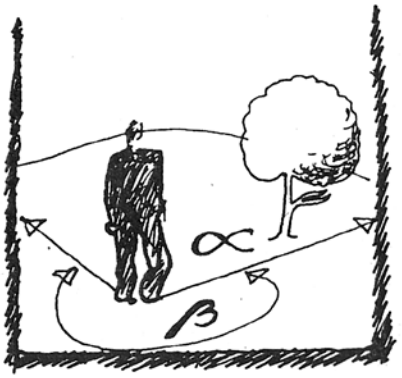


Fig 1

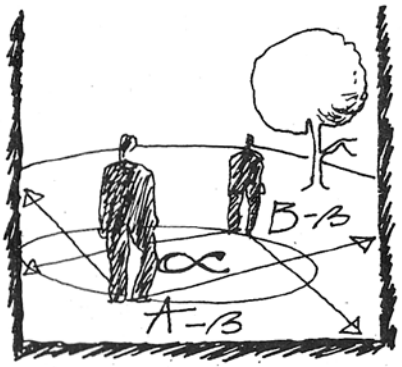


Fig 2

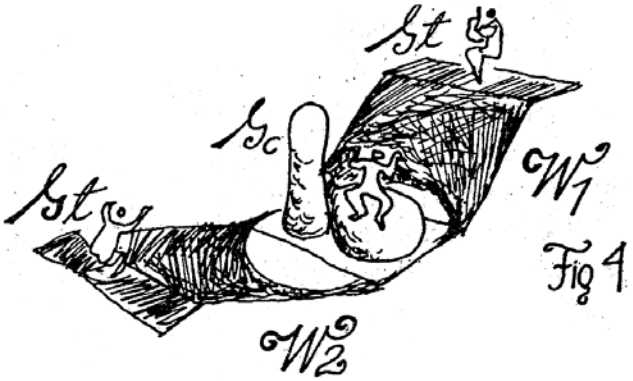


Fig 4

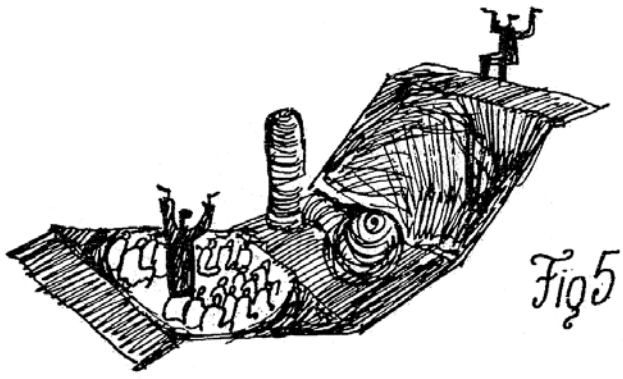


Fig 5

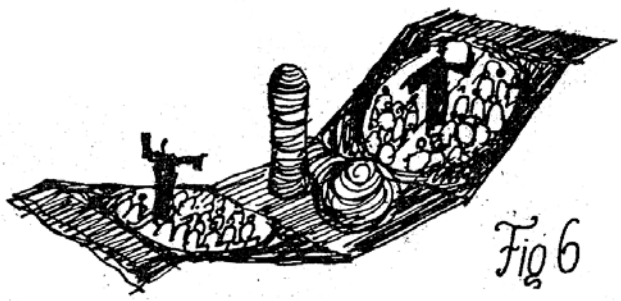
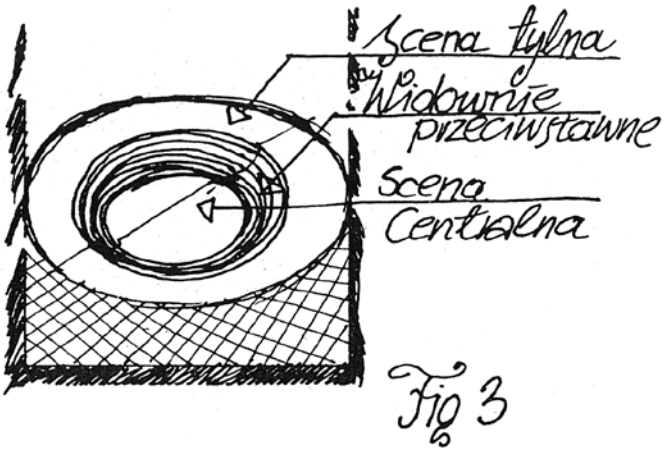


Fig 6

Figures 1-3, above: series of preparatory theatre sketches by Jerzy Gurawski.

Figures 4-6, left: production drawings for *Shakuntala*, after Kalidasa (1960).



Arnold Szyfman who was among them – reassured me about the soundness of the direction of my search, which involved considering the possibility of changes in the spatial relationship between the stage and the auditorium.[4]

Inspired by the theatre avant-garde of the 1920s and the staging ideas of [Erwin] Piscator and [Vsevelod] Meyerhold, I was looking for solutions based on simple mechanisms, which would freely shape the stage and the auditorium in various combinations. But these solutions seemed to me to be too 'mechanical' and devoid of the secrets of theatrical magic.

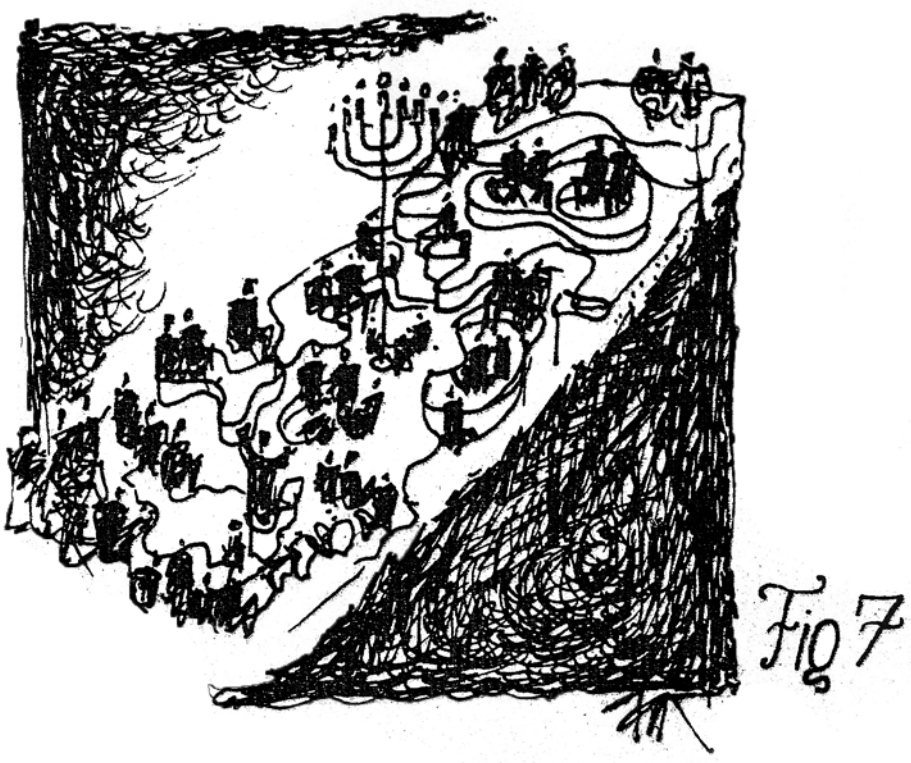
In 1960, for my diploma at the Department of Architecture, which I was preparing under the auspices of Professor Zbigniew Kupiec, I conducted quite a comprehensive analysis of spatial relationships in theatres through the centuries. I was considering the mutual relationships between the stage and the auditorium, starting with ancient Greek theatres – where the correspondence between the architecture and the landscape space was special, and it seemed that it would never again be so special in the history of the theatre – up until the time of the baroque 'box' theatre which, as we know, exists to this day. Much interesting information can be found in particular with regard to paratheatrical activities such as medieval mysteries that took place in the streets and town squares, where the 'mansions' marked out the main space for the events; or sports stadia or Spanish *corrida*, where any sense of individuality is lost as the crowd becomes one mass-spectator. The shared light of the sun lit all these gigantic audiences and stages. In addition, there were also fair stalls and circus tents with their central stage, unchanged for centuries, without an extensive set, where only the actor and a prop – which also played a strictly defined role – were at the core of the events.

Based on this study, I worked out a theory of dependency that exists in the theatrical space and that influences the spectator. I believe that the space is influenced by light, colour, sound, and movement and by the sphere that I regarded as the most essential and the most 'magical' – that is, by the space of intuition that surrounds a person beyond their field of sight. The synthesis of these solutions is shown in Figures 1 and 2. Alpha (α) signifies what can be seen and heard within the reach of sight. This is the space that is being perceived. Beta (β) describes what is behind the spectators, what is mysterious but can nevertheless be sensed. This is intuitional space. However, in order to make the 'action', there need to be at least two people – the givers and the receivers of sensations. This is shown in Figure 2. As can be seen in the illustration, what happens in front of and behind B is within reach of A's sight. Therefore, the reactions of A in

[4] Arnold Szyfman (Schiffmann; 1882-1967) was a theatre director and manager, initiator of the building of the Teatr Polski (Polish Theatre) in Warsaw in 1913 and its director for many years. Eds.

response to the intuitional space of B are a reflection of the impressions and the experience of events that are invisible to B.

This very simple 'discovery' about spatial relationships opened up new possibilities for accomplishing the previous idea: to draw the spectator within the theatre event and make them the co-creator of a performance. Based on these relationships, I designed – as my final assignment – an 'ideal' theatre with opposing auditoria: a central stage [*scena centralna*] and a back stage [*scena tylna*] area that surrounds the audience. This is shown in Figure 3 [*Widownie przeciwstawne* means Opposing Auditoria].



Thus, there was a theoretical background to this – but it was rather excessive. Probably nothing would have come of it, if by a stroke of luck I hadn't met Jerzy Grotowski, the future great Magus of the theatre, who was just starting out on his path to fame and who was giving talks with very exotic and complicated titles at the Klub Pod Jaszczurami (Club Under the Sign of the Lizards) on the Old Market Square in Kraków, which I used to frequent.[5] Our first contact and exchange of ideas about theatrical space led to my being employed at the Teatr 13 Rzędów in Opole when Grotowski and the no-less-eminent Ludwik Flaszen started running it.

In Opole, which was quite a sleepy Silesian town in those days, I underwent a test. My theatre knowledge and sensitivity did not stir much enthusiasm, although my passion for building a space was regarded positively by the masters! I became the 'Doctor of the Theatre Space', although it was only a verbal acknowledgement; unfortunately, I never asked for a certificate. The place where I was supposed to create 'the theatre space' appeared to be a large room, six metres across by twelve metres long, and not much over three metres high, which is currently a base for the Klub Związków Twórczych (Creative Unions' Club).[6]

The first play for which I designed a theatre space was the ancient Indian erotic drama *Shakuntala* by Kalidasa, which was adapted by Grotowski (1960). I received

[5] The club, which is still active today, was a legendary meeting place for academics in Kraków during communist times. Eds.

[6] This is now a pub. The only sign that the Laboratory worked at Rynek 4 in Opole is a plaque on the front of the building which was officially 'opened' on 5 March 1993 by the mayor of Opole, Jacek Kucharzewski.The inscription reads: '*Tutaj w latach 1959-1964 działał Teatr 13 Rzędów Jerzego Grotowskiego*' (Here Jerzy Grotowski's Theatre of the 13 Rows worked from 1959-1964). Eds.

Figure 7: production drawing for Mickiewicz's *Forefathers' Eve* (1961).

permission to implement the theory of the back and central stage areas and opposing auditoria. So we made a new theatre space by removing the stage rostra and a few platforms that we had found in the auditorium there. We created a space solely for this particular theatre performance.

The central stage was equipped with phallic symbols – Grotowski's idea – which were a quite literal display of Hindu eroticism. Two stage areas behind contained less defined forms, on which the yogis sat. The opposing auditoria constituted two gathering places – one for the court and the other for the princesses. A description of the events in this space during the performance would be too complicated for me to explain, so I will present only a synthesis of the events in three drawings.

Figure 4 shows the action taking place on the central stage. W1 and W2 are the opposing auditoria; Sc is the central stage and St – the rear or intuitional stage. Figure 5 shows the transfer of events to one of the auditoria. Figure 6 illustrates events in the two opposite auditoria.

I don't feel able – or even authorised – to describe the performance. I was deeply involved in this work and was too fascinated with my own part in it and with the poetics of the performance as well as its symbolic values, which were deeper than the description of the space that I have just presented here. I can only add that to my great joy, the testing of my theoretical hypotheses went smoothly. The spatial solutions turned out to be useful and worked well. I think I have the right to mention the beautiful costumes designed by children from the Art School, under the guidance of Wincenty Maszkowski, who were inspired by Hindu art, as well as the strangely menacing masks painted onto the actors' faces.

It is worth mentioning the actors themselves, who at that time were beginning their fame-filled, though difficult path in Grotowski's theatre; especially the two actors, Rena Mirecka and Zygmunt Molik, who stayed in the company until the end, and the late Antoni Jahołkowski. They were often in acrobatic poses based on yoga positions, sometimes doing headstands and reciting a difficult text from *Shakuntala,* and were starting then to use various resonators and other vocal solutions.

In general, *Shakuntala* was, as they say, popular. It was an intriguing performance, which got many reviews. The most beautiful and most important review for the continuation of the theatre as an institution was by a man whose opinion counted a lot in those days: the poet Władysław Broniewski (1897-1962), who understood and interpreted the whole poetics of this adaptation very well.

We travelled with this performance to many cities in Poland. We performed in Kraków (the Dom Plastyków/Artists' House on Łobzowska Street), in Łódź (the Klub Studencki Pstrąg/'Trout' Student Club) and in Wrocław (the KDM – Klub Dziennikarzy/Journalists' Club).[7] But I believe the performance was greatly diminished when it was presented outside our venue in Opole. Due to financial constraints, we did not

[7] The Theatre of 13 Rows performed *Shakuntala* in Kraków from 8 to 15 January 1961; in Łódź they actually presented it in the Studencki Teatr Satyryczny 'Cytryna' ('Lemon' Student Satirical Theatre) on 21 and 22 January 1961; and in Wrocław they showed it in the Studencki Klub 'Pałacyk' ('Little Palace' Student Club), the Wojewódzki Dom Kultury (Regional Culture House), and in the Klub Dziennikarzy (Journalists' Club) from 16 to 20 March 1961. Eds.

take the rostra with us to build the opposing audiences, and this limited the spatial arrangements. When touring we used to play on flat floors with only one central rostrum. At that time, the theatre was only just laying the groundwork for future fame and we had to compromise on many things.

The next Grotowski performance for which I designed the space was *Dziady* (Forefathers' Eve, 1961), based on Adam Mickiewicz's text. The design for *Dziady* was a new and wonderful adventure. We continued the spatial arrangements that we had started in *Shakuntala*. However, this time, any division between the audience and the performance space was completely removed: both the audience and the stage became one, in terms of the space and material used. The light was also shared by both spaces and the actor had the technical opportunity to alter and to move the light, since we used natural candlelight.[8]

I hope that this text will at least roughly help the reader to imagine what the architect's role and activity was – what 'The Doctor of the Theatre Space' in Grotowski's theatre was. I worked for Grotowski for many years, preparing the designs for subsequent productions and every one of these designs is a long story about the space, the light, the shadow, the props, and the master's inspiration. In the end, Grotowski himself broke all the spatial limitations in creating *Apocalypsis cum Figuris*, and, soon after, his theatre sailed towards unknown spaces: the paratheatrical activities.

With this short text, I would like to thank Jurek [Jerzy Grotowski] and all my friends and theatre colleagues for many years of living and working together.

TRANSLATED BY JUSTYNA DROBNIK-ROGERS

---

[8] In fact, the performers used battery-operated artificial candles in *Dziady*. Eds.

Apocalypsis cum Figuris

STANISŁAW SCIERSKI TALKS TO KRYSTYNA STARCZAK-KOZŁOWSKA

STANISŁAW SCIERSKI (1939-1983) was an actor with the Teatr Laboratorium from 1964 until his suicide on 11 July 1983. He performed the roles of Don Enrique in *The Constant Prince* (1965), Laban and Paris in the fifth version of *Akropolis* (1967), and John in *Apocalypsis cum Figuris* (1968/69). He co-created the paratheatrical project *Tree of People* [*Drzewo ludzi*] (1979), participated in *Polish Thanatos* [*Thanatos polski*] (1981), and led numerous work sessions internationally. In March 1993 his drawings were exhibited at the Na Odwachu Gallery in Wrocław and were published in Poland by Jan Bortkiewicz and Eugeniusz Get-Stankiewicz two years later.

This interview was originally published in *Odra*, 6 (1974), 85-86, and reprinted in *Teksty* (Texts) (Wrocław: Instytut Aktora – Teatr Laboratorium, 1975), pp. 81-88.

Krystyna Starczak-Kozłowska: I would like to ask you – as an actor in the Teatr Laboratorium and especially as John in *Apocalypsis cum Figuris* – about your method of work on a performance, on a role, and about your work on *Apocalypsis* in particular.

Stanisław Scierski: I don't think there was any preconceived method behind the whole process of creating *Apocalypsis*. Nothing like it – no plan, no outer framework, no assumptions. And so, maybe there was a kind of calling from outside that was tapping at us from within. And the creation itself? It is perhaps a journey, a wandering. One that goes within us, into our essence. Because when we are really wandering – just simply going – 'for' or 'towards' ourselves, then we can end up anywhere, as if unconcerned about the outer destination of our journey. And yet, having finally reached this 'towards', or simply having reached our 'selves' – it turns out that we have arrived at a certain specific place, with a landscape that we didn't know before. What is within us and what is within this landscape intersect, as if we'd entrusted something to each other. And a new calling can be heard within this landscape... Perhaps this metaphor is the most appropriate way of describing the nature of our path towards *Apocalypsis*. Because apparently there was a kind of initial outline – a rough draft of the text – that Grotowski prepared, based on *Samuel Zborowski*.[1] It also included suggestions about the casting of the roles, and there was even a sort of discussion about this draft: What is it for us? What within it is contained in each of us? What is alive within it that comes to me? What is alive within me that I can bring to it? However, when we began to work on our individual and collective études – without using the text from this draft, not even as a 'support', just keeping it as if on the fringes of our memory – it emerged that the seed, the essence of these études was leading us away from *Samuel Zborowski* and towards the Gospels. Not in terms of the Gospels' literary or religious dimensions, but in terms of what was alive in them that was present within us – just as time is alive in us, in a human way. And this was the direction we took.

Starczak-Kozłowska: And what was Grotowski's role in this search?

Scierski: Grotowski was entrusted with shaping the course of this collective search. He helped to develop the études – respecting

[1] The Teatr Laboratorium worked on an adaptation of Juliusz Słowacki's *Samuel Zborowski* from 8 December 1965 to 31 May 1966. Trans.

our right to take risks – and he selected and often completely inspired them. In a word, he watched over the riverbed that we were collectively bringing into being. It should be emphasised that many of the études were improvisational in nature.[2] This is how the performance under the working title of *Ewangelie* (The Gospels) came into being. There were even several performances with invited audiences.[3] After one of these, we concluded, with Grotowski, that a completely new construction had emerged – but one that was rooted in familiar territory, and that, roughly speaking, several traces of our previous accomplishments could be detected within it. Thus, we decided to give it up, while keeping with us everything that we felt was fertile in it. And then we saw the essential perspective for us that, as it turned out, would eventually lead to *Apocalypsis*. From the études we'd presented to Grotowski, and from those he'd prepared with us since the beginning, he put together a new whole. For those études that didn't contain any text but which obviously required some, Grotowski – together with the actors – proposed some new suggestions. In addition to Dostoevsky, he included texts by T.S. Eliot and Simone Weil – writers he knew to be familiar and close to us. All this work was an experience that was exulting and dramatic for me in equal measure; at the same time bringing a sense of understanding of this particular *communion* in which the proximity of someone close to you brings you unforeseen hope and strength. And in no way would I be able to relate it to 'theatricality' – even in its most authentic sense – or even to 'artistic experience'.

Starczak-Kozłowska: What is the purpose of the research in the Teatr Laboratorium – the Actors' Institute?

Scierski: A figure who stands out for us, Professor Kotarbiński,[4] once quoted Michelangelo: 'We shouldn't make light of trifles, as trifles make perfection, and perfection is no trifle'. I think I've quoted him correctly. Returning to your question, if I were to respond with this quote, I'd only keep the part about the 'trifles', because I don't think the Teatr Laboratorium would ever allow itself the luxury of a search for some kind of generally understood 'perfection', in a direct or smug way. Even less so in terms of a discursively-defined objective. And the trifles – yes, these have been dealt with very carefully in the Teatr Laboratorium, and I could say that among them there has never been room for building up a kind of 'stock means of expression', for any knowledge of *how* (to do), for any chance of *knowing* (how to solve something in advance), for any kinds of prescriptions. This '*knowing*', whenever it emerged, was in that very moment called into question. Was it therefore only an eliminative, negative 'programme'? No. There was a positive one, too, although it was never formulated straightforwardly. It was underground in some way – more like water that is absorbed by the earth than understanding through words. We could speak here about the desire – different for each actor/human being – to liberate their innate possibility for opening up, for completeness, for wholeness. His or hers – this Concrete Human Being. We could speak about moving beyond oneself, in the sense that we open up what is most essential for us, and what is the unity in the human being. What I've just said is very general, but at the same time very 'tangible'.

Starczak-Kozłowska: What preparatory exercises did you do when you were undertaking this programme?

Scierski: We'd been doing exercises – there were many of them, even – before three

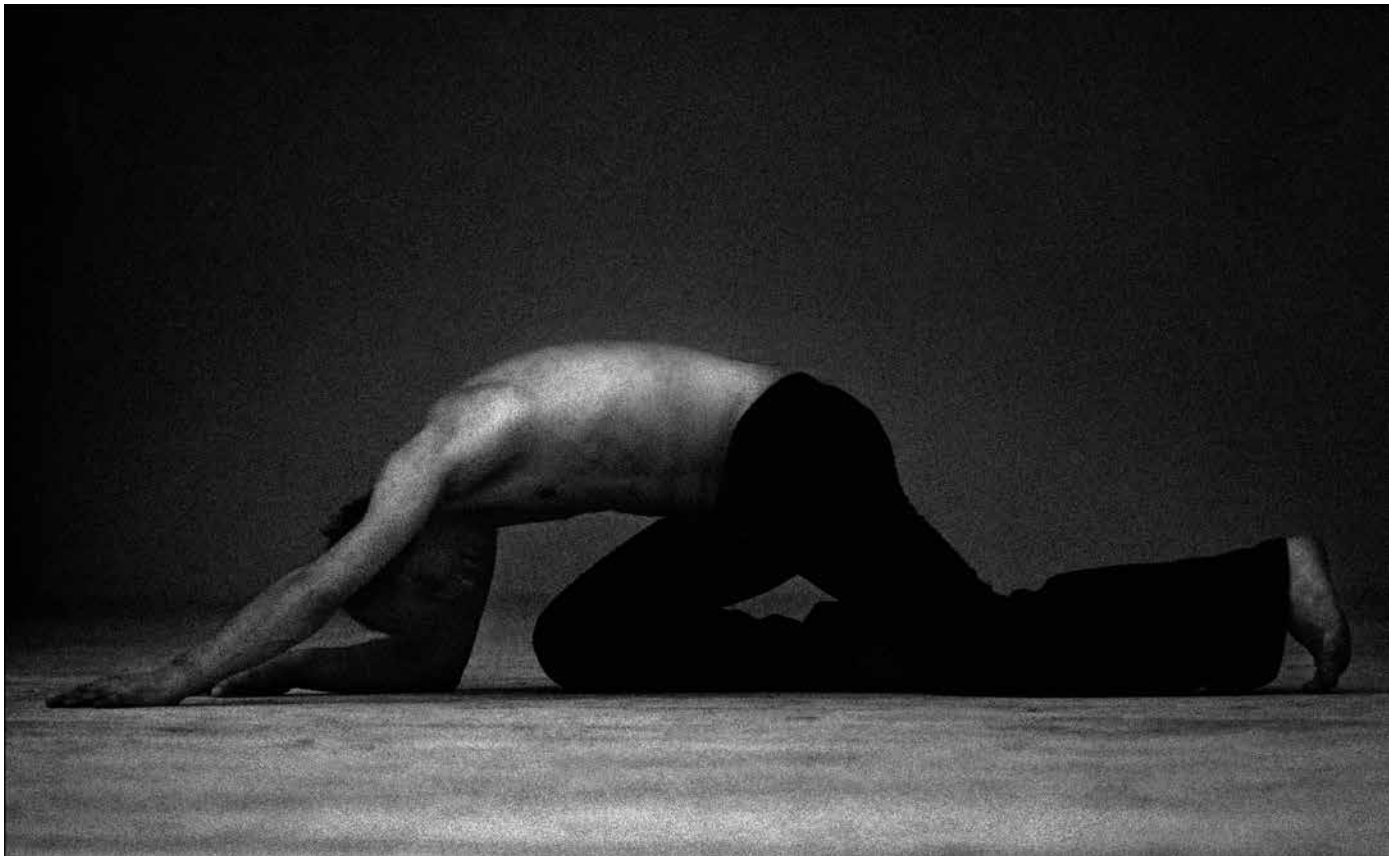
Stanisław Scierski as John in *Apocalypsis cum Figuris* in 1979.
Photograph: Maurizio Buscarino.

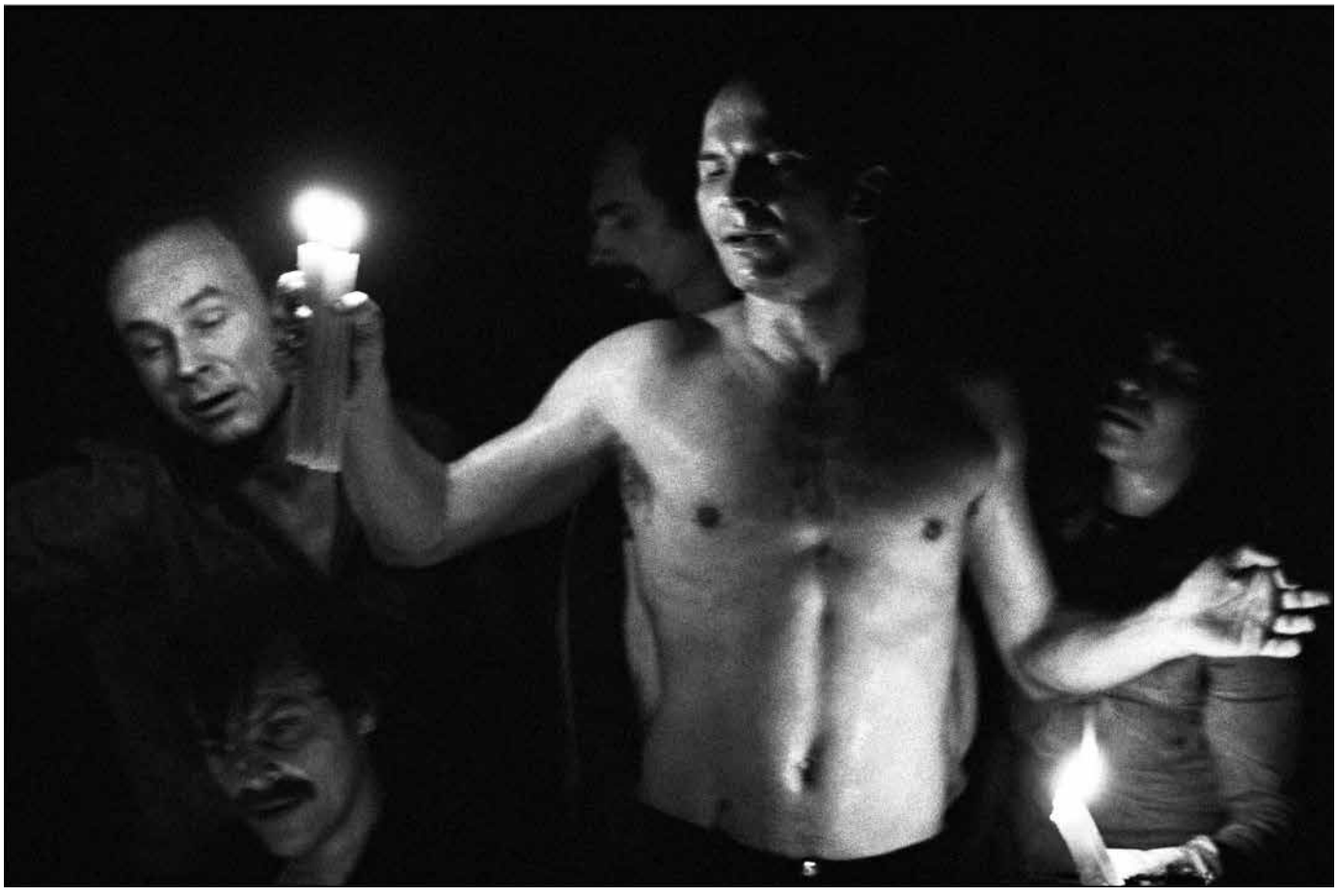
From left: Zbigniew Cynkutis (below), Zygmunt Molik (above), Antoni Jahołkowski, Stanisław Scierski, and Elizabeth Albahaca in *Apocalypsis cum Figuris*.
Photograph: Maurizio Buscarino.

[2] Following the period of work under the title *Samuel Zborowski*, throughout summer and autumn of 1966 the actors worked on 'cycles' and 'études' until the work came under the project title *Ewangelie*, beginning from the rehearsal on 19 November 1966. Trans.

[3] *Ewangelie* was presented to an invited audience on 20 March 1967. Eds.

[4] Tadeusz Marian Kotarbiński (1886-1981) was Professor of Philosophy at the University of Warsaw, then Rector of the University of Łódź (1945-1949) and a member of the Polish Academy of Sciences (1957-1962). Trans.





basic sections emerged: *corporel*, *plastique*, and vocal. In any case, these were in a state of constant searching, of change. The searching in this area was simply logical when you consider that the exercises were aimed at ridding our bodies of inertia, of laziness, in order for us to be able to reveal ourselves in our human, physical totality – so that the body didn't present an obstacle, and didn't separate a person from their self. So the exercises couldn't become set, they couldn't congeal into a form – if they became rigid, they would no longer awaken anything within us. Such as they were, they never turned into gymnastics for example, which repelled me. But neither were they – nor could they be – some kind of automatic device for producing a particular state [...]. In fact, we completely ruled out the notion of a given 'state' – it simply didn't have the right to exist. Furthermore, no one could ever allow themselves to look for a certain 'state' while in the action. It was always kept very down-to-earth. Because it wasn't about generalities, which in any case are elusive, it wasn't about a 'state'. Maybe this will help clarify the matter: the action doesn't just come from within a human being [człowiek], it doesn't take place within a bubble, in isolation, precisely 'in a state' – which can be caused variously by being too full of yourself, or shining with a sterile, professional perfectionism or a kind of self-induced 'intellectual' pathos. Rather, it is towards – not even for, but towards – Him or Her, towards the Present One. If I were to try to dispel any ambiguity here, I would have to say: I am from You. On many levels I am Your co-existence, Your co-runner, Your co-blood – or, if you prefer, Your reflection. I want to reach a moment in which I can meet You as I am, in all that is most essential within me; that is, in You too. In You; that is, in me. And I don't know if it's in joy or in sorrow – it's in existence, full existence.

Starczak-Kozłowska: Are the terms often used to describe types of acting in contemporary theatre such as 'experiencing' and 'mimetic' acting [*przeżywanie i odtwarzanie*] – unsuitable for your theatre? [5]

Scierski: Actually, we are trying to limit the possibilities for them to be able to function as a 'screen', or as a sort of 'casing', an externally-demonstrated form of action – in fact, as a way of hiding oneself.

Starczak-Kozłowska: What about the role of improvisation within a finished production?

Scierski: Improvisation is indispensable within the score of a role, which – like the score of the whole performance – is a riverbed, in which a constantly new river is flowing.

Starczak-Kozłowska: The last, and most essential matter: who, for you, is the spectator?

Scierski: We won't call them a spectator, but rather a human being who has come here. I think we come together to confide in one another: him, me, her, again him. If there is still a 'spectator', the greater is my fault for allowing them to be a mere spectator.

TRANSLATED BY DUNCAN JAMIESON AND ADELA KARSZNIA

---

[5] The Polish term *przeżywanie* is etymologically related to the Russian term employed by Stanislavsky – *perezhivanie*. The latter has been translated into English variously as 'living through', 'experiencing' and 'revivification', among others. Trans.

Curiosity and a Readiness to Search for the New

ANTONI JAHOŁKOWSKI TALKS TO TADEUSZ BURZYŃSKI

ANTONI JAHOŁKOWSKI (1931-1981) was one of the main actors of the Teatr Laboratorium, who co-founded the company and worked there until his death from cancer on 1 September 1981. He performed in each of the Laboratorium's theatre productions and was active as a work leader during the paratheatrical period. Notably, he created the roles of The King in *The Constant Prince* (1965) and of Simon Peter in *Apocalypsis cum Figuris* (1968/69), and later participated in *Tree of People* [*Drzewo ludzi*] (1979) and performed in *Polish Thanatos* [*Thanatos polski*] (1981). Jahołkowski also led numerous work sessions internationally.

This interview was originally published as 'Ciekawość i gotowość szukania nowego', *Gazeta Robotnicza*, 263 (22 November 1979) 3 and 5, and reprinted in *Notatnik Teatralny*, 22-23 (2000), 95-98, as well as in Tadeusz Burzyński, *Mój Grotowski* (My Grotowski), ed. by Janusz Degler and Grzegorz Ziółkowski (Wrocław: Grotowski Centre, 2006), pp. 147-54.

During a recent meeting to mark the Teatr Laboratorium's twentieth anniversary [15 November 1979], Jerzy Grotowski spoke almost exclusively about the past. Although he did not especially wish it, [the event] could not pass by without some reminiscences. Among these was a description of a shabby bus – metaphorical or real – which carried several of [the company], who were determined to embark on their difficult but independent adventure.

They left the appeal of Kraków, and some of them left renowned theatres just when they might have expected to make a breakthrough. Of the present members of the company – other than Ludwik Flaszen and Jerzy Grotowski, the originators of this adventure – riding on this bus were Rena Mirecka, Zygmunt Molik, and Antoni Jahołkowski. The day before the anniversary, the latter and I conversed about the past.

T. B.

Tadeusz Buski [Burzyński]: Tell us about the path that led you to the Teatr Laboratorium.

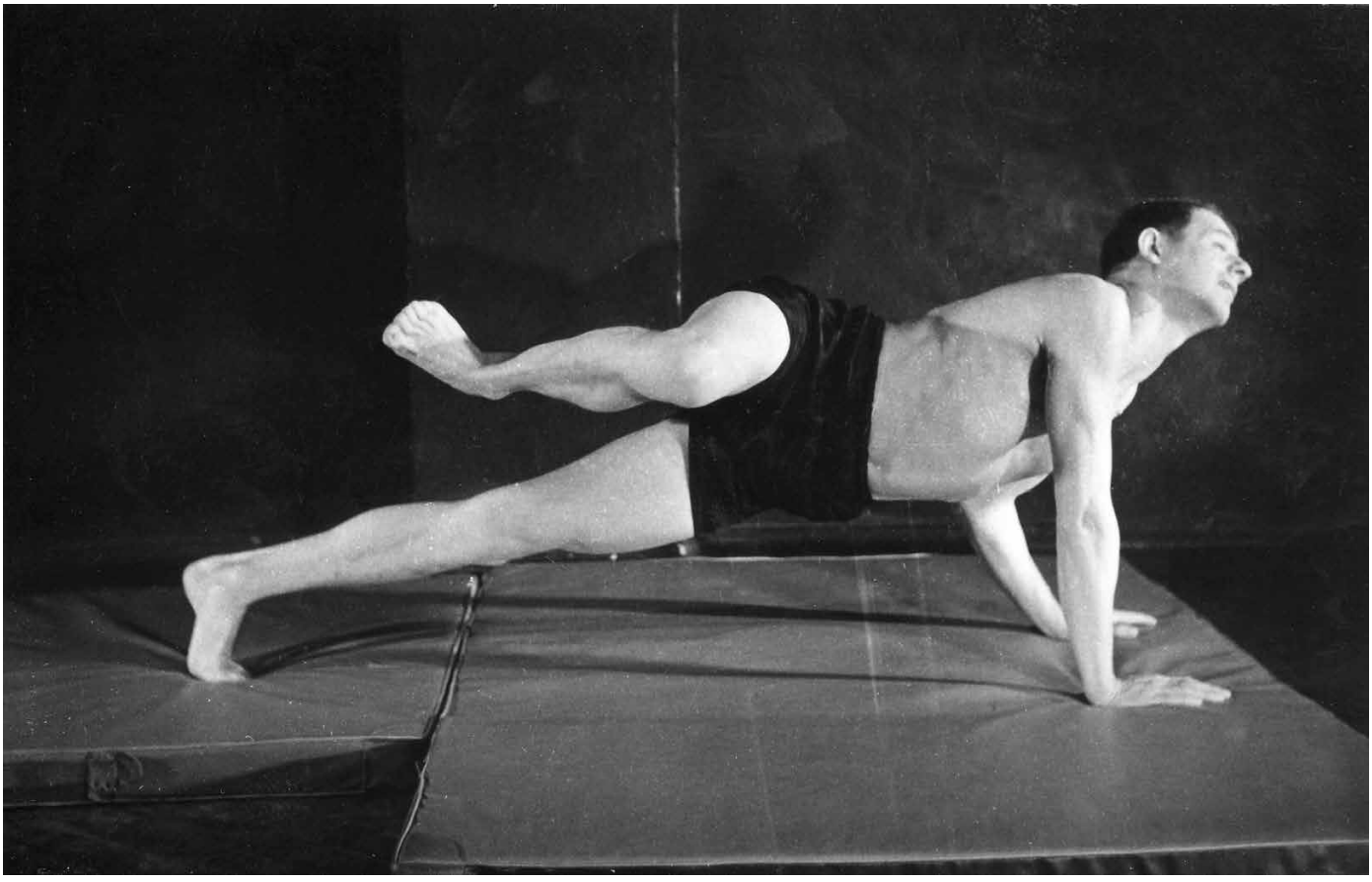
Antoni Jahołkowski: In 1952 – after the *matura*[1] (which I took in Rabka), a failed attempt to get into the film school in Łódź, and a year working as a cultural and educational official – I ended up in Kraków, where I began my studies at the AGH.[2] I trained as an engineer, specialising in electrics in the coal mining industry, but I was better suited to the cultural activities run by the students.

On one occasion, the very astute deacon said to me: 'You'll probably go on to complete your studies but it seems to me that you won't become an engineer; why don't you go to drama school?' I took his advice. After two years of studying at the polytechnic, I began to study acting. I didn't complete the course. I took up an acting job. First in the Teatr Rapsodyczny (Rhapsodic Theatre); later, in the Teatr Rozmaitości (Variety Theatre).

Things had just started going well for me – I got interesting roles, I was cast in several performances, I was preparing for my diploma exam – when Grotowski asked me to join

[1] The final secondary school exams in Poland. Trans.

[2] Akademia Górniczo-Hutnicza (Academy of Mining and Industrial Works). Trans.



Antoni Jahołkowski performing 'The Cat' exercise, early 1960s.
Photograph: Ryszard Cieślak.

him in Opole. He told me frankly that this adventure probably wouldn't last more than a year, and that its long-term prospects were uncertain. But there was a chance.

Actually, I didn't really hesitate. Two hours. I packed my things in my father's army kitbag and went with them. I postponed my diploma for several years, but completed it eventually.

Burzyński: Did you know Grotowski before then?

Jahołkowski: We'd met a few times, but more in the context of social and political activity – in the youth movement. I'd also seen his first productions as a director, which I found interesting.

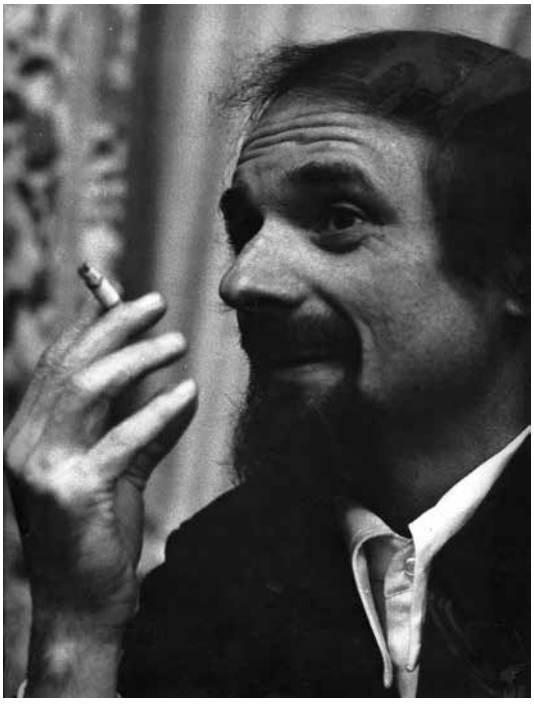
Burzyński: An acting career – perhaps a very significant one – was within your reach. It's true, you were looking for something beyond theatre as well, but from a certain perspective, don't you think you did something crazy, something rash?

Jahołkowski: I have a teenage son who might well ask me: 'Dad, how should each of us go about finding our *own* place in life?' I would answer, from my own experience, that each person comes face-to-face one day with their own *most important opportunity*. What's difficult is to notice it, and to recognise it.

The choice I made at that time was, to a certain degree, an intuitive one; in any case, it defied reason. But I don't think that it was made blindly or accidentally. I suppose I might've been predisposed to making such a journey – perhaps because of my background; stretching right back from my father, my family hasn't been lacking in knights and soldiers. It was a family where certain 'noble' values – homeland, fidelity, honour – were not just empty words. Within me was a readiness to set out on a journey in the name of the ideas and values I believed in.

Burzyński: Did you soon begin to share Grotowski's ideas?

Jahołkowski: Grotowski was very honest with us. He was always ahead of us, but he never imposed anything. In the long run,



Antoni Jahołkowski in 1980.
Photographer unknown.

you can't work against yourself. And since the work was always hard, and for many years didn't give us any prospect of securing the basic material needs for our families, I can't imagine persisting with it without some kind of deep motivation.

Burzyński: There were stories circulating about how Grotowski abused you [the actors].

Jahołkowski: Grotowski created for us – for the actors – opportunities that are difficult to come across elsewhere. After the initial stage of quite varied research, which at times was close to work conducted in traditional theatre, he departed entirely from what you might call 'directing' in the conventional sense of the word. He took the actor to be the main creator – he himself was someone who inspired us; sometimes he was simply the first spectator, albeit a very strict one. He didn't straighten us out or admonish us. Our task was to *search* within ourselves, in our bodies, in the space, in our mutual relationships.

Was it difficult? Yes, it was. There were hours-long rehearsals that didn't result in anything. And then – after a short sleep – everything started anew. And sometimes we'd have dreams about our scary Boss shrieking alternately: 'I don't believe it!' 'Not true!' 'I don't believe it!'...[3]

Burzyński: How many times were you tempted to leave all this?

Jahołkowski: Perhaps you won't believe me, but not even once. I must have been resilient – although it wasn't just that. It would've been easy for us to break down if we had only been undertaking this work in the name of some belief that we felt to be abstract. But this work resulted in very concrete and tangible results.

For me, the work on our version of *Hamlet* [*Studium o Hamlecie*] was an extremely important experience.[4] I had been open to a completely new experience, and it came during the work on *Hamlet* – I could say it was in the preparation of the role, but in fact it was very personal. It was a sort of rediscovery of myself, an appreciation of the possibility of a different, previously unknown quality of presence in the space – a kind of new 'body language'. It was physical – and very concrete. It didn't result from 'formal' research, but rather from searching for a relationship between the body and the space, objects, partners...

Burzyński: Can you describe it more clearly?

Jahołkowski: I simply existed, observed, and walked *differently*. It wasn't a learned, invented walk. Every movement was of my *whole* being. Born from organic impulses. I was touching the space, my partners and objects with my *self*. When the body is integrated in this way, there are no isolated movements. Practically, this experience opened possibilities that allowed me to find my place in *Apocalypsis cum Figuris*.

Burzyński: That, as we know, was your [the company's] final theatre performance. How

[3] Boss is an affectionate term for Grotowski used by his close collaborators. See Gardecka's and Mirecka's pieces in this volume for further comment on this. Eds.

[4] The first presentation of *Studium o Hamlecie* (Hamlet Study), based on texts by William Shakespeare and Stanisław Wyspiański, took place in the Teatr Laboratorium 13 Rzędów (Laboratory Theatre of the 13 Rows) on 17 March 1964. The performance was presented twenty times, up to 30 May – only in Opole. Jahołkowski played the role of the King. Eds.

did the company take Grotowski's declaration that he would no longer be making performances?

Jahołkowski: Grotowski had informed us about this a long time in advance, before he made it public. He informed us frankly that what interested him in theatre was already exhausted, and that what he wanted to take on was uncertain and might end up as a complete failure. He promised to help anyone who couldn't find themselves within this new adventure – materially, or to find a job elsewhere, etc. But formally, everyone at work was given their notice.[5]

It wasn't an easy challenge for me. We were performing *Apocalypsis cum Figuris* and nothing else. Our other works were put on hold – it was unbearable. So, with one of my colleagues, I started to do various improvised 'follies'. After several weeks, we asked Grotowski to come and observe. All he said was: 'Continue'. Other colleagues joined our group. Grotowski divided his time in turns between us – the 'old' ones – and the new group selected for the paratheatrical work. Later, a team was formed from these groups that realised the outdoor projects near Oleśnica.[6] We also signed new contracts.

Burzyński: You grew up in an unusual theatre – and yet it was still a theatre. Don't you feel, in the post-theatrical period, a certain longing for acting work?

Jahołkowski: No, certainly not. I'll explain more fully – I went through a period of longing for what I might call 'a great role'. This disappeared completely after the work on *Hamlet*. After that experience, those desires faded. After all, the essence of work is in *how I fulfil myself*, and not in the prestige attached to it (which in any case is relative). What is important doesn't depend on the amount of text, but on the intensity of being. This is, I imagine, easy to sense in the performances of *Apocalypsis*, where this is the most essential aspect from our point of view.

Although *Apocalypsis* is considered a piece of theatre, for us it has an altogether different quality. Some people in Poland and abroad see it as natural that today the limits of theatre have significantly expanded. Whatever we'd call our current work (different names were used at different stages: 'paratheatre', 'active culture'), we have moved far away from 'creative' acting [*aktorstwo kreacyjne*] and the traditional relationship between the actor (the sender) and the spectator (the recipient).[7] I myself am intrigued by what we are working on at the moment in *Tree of People* – all the more so because it is still so open, so fresh. Because in fact it is like taking our first steps with something completely new, and there is still a long way ahead of us. At least for me, it is a different, more advanced stage of the adventure that was once on the level of the actor's research and fulfilment.

Burzyński: The Laboratorium's recent work is accompanied by a question: might something emerge from your current research that would become theatre once again?

Jahołkowski: As I said, nowadays the notion of 'theatre' has been transformed. If your question is: 'Are you going to stage performances similar to the ones you've done before?' I'd reply: 'No' – or at least I can't picture myself doing this. If, on the other hand, you're asking if our research might end up in something we haven't done before – something that might still be called 'theatre' – then this is possible.

---

[5] As part of the transition process, company members had to be formally fired and then re-hired. Trans.

[6] Jahołkowski is referring to the Laboratorium-owned former farm buildings located in the forest, near the village of Brzezinka, approximately forty kilometres north-east of Wrocław. Brzezinka hosted activities from paratheatre and then from Theatre of Sources. Since its renovation in 2002, it has been a site for practical activities of the Grotowski Centre and then the Grotowski Institute. Eds.

[7] Jahołkowski is referring to a term that is most often associated with the Polish repertory theatre tradition (literally 'creational acting'), in which the actor actively takes decisions to 'build a character' or an 'acting creation'. In contrast, the actors of the Laboratorium had no such onus on them to be 'creative' or to represent a particular figure or state; rather their roles emerged through development of sequences of responses to stimuli derived from contact with partners and personal associations. Trans.

In truth, I don't like to predict what might happen. If, over a decade ago, someone had asked me about the next premiere in the Laboratorium, I would have answered that we'd be doing *Ewangelie* (The Gospels), which we had just prepared following many months of improvisation and searching – a strange, one-off performance that lasted… eleven hours! After this there were no other performances of *Ewangelie*, and, several months later, *Apocalypsis cum Figuris* emerged from the same sources of inspiration, as well as from new ones.[8]

Burzyński: What would be your wish on the occasion of the anniversary?[9]

Jahołkowski: I'd like to be able to sustain my curiosity and readiness to search for the *new* as long as I can; and when this is no longer possible, to be able to withdraw in time and with dignity.

TRANSLATED BY DUNCAN JAMIESON AND ADELA KARSZNIA

[8] *Ewangelie* was presented once, to an invited audience, on 20 March 1967. The first presentation of *Apocalypsis cum Figuris* – also for invited guests – took place on 19 July 1968. Trans. [The only journalist to see this first presentation was Tadeusz Burzyński. Eds.]

[9] The twentieth anniversary of the founding of the Teatr Laboratorium. Trans.

On the Opposite Pole from the Mundane

JACEK ZMYSŁOWSKI TALKS TO TADEUSZ BURZYŃSKI

JACEK ZMYSŁOWSKI (1953-1982) was a member of the Teatr Laboratorium from 1974 until his death from cancer on 4 February 1982. He was a key work leader in the company, directing the Laboratorium's *Mountain Project* [*Przedsięwzięcie Góra*] in 1977 and leading the project *The Vigil* [*Czuwanie*] from November 1977, a version of which was filmed by Jill Godmilow in Milan in 1979. Zmysłowski participated in the Theatre of Sources expedition to Mexico in 1980, and was leading paratheatrical work in the United States in 1981, shortly before his death.

This interview was originally published as 'Na przeciwległym biegunie potoczności', *Scena*, 11 (1978), 30-31, and reprinted in Tadeusz Burzyński, *Mój Grotowski* (My Grotowski), ed. by Janusz Degler and Grzegorz Ziółkowski (Wrocław: Grotowski Centre, 2006), pp. 121-31. Some extended sections of this text were cited in translation in Jennifer Kumiega's *The Theatre of Grotowski* (London: Methuen, 1985); see Kumiega, p. 197, for example. We have used this translation as a helpful guide, though have also departed from it at times for the sake of consistency.

Jacek Zmysłowski's name has appeared now for several years on posters and other documents concerning certain Teatr Laboratorium projects. He directed aspects of the work of *The University of Research of the Theatre of Nations* [*Uniwersytet Poszukiwań Teatru Narodów*], Wrocław, from 14 June to 7 July 1975; he ran the programme *Vers un Mont Parallèle* in France (30 May to 6 June, and 16 to 20 June 1976); he was artistic director of [1977's] *Mountain Project* [*Przedsięwzięcie Góra*][1] and is currently artistic director of *Earth Project* [*Przedsięwzięcie Ziemia*].[2] Zmysłowski is the key figure in this current of Grotowski's Laboratorium's prospective searches, which no longer develops on the border of theatre but beyond the theatre (there are other currents that continue to remain closely related to the theatre, to varying degrees). This activity, which has not always been understood, especially by those who have only heard about it, has caused some controversy – based mainly on misunderstandings – and has attracted growing interest. I participated in several of Zmysłowski's projects. The following conversation was conducted during a break between the cycles of his *Vigils* [*Czuwania*], the initial stage of *Earth Project*.

T. B.

Tadeusz Burzyński: Are the people who are passing through these rooms of the theatre that have been assigned to you the leaders of *Earth Project?* How many are you? I can see some foreigners…

Jacek Zmysłowski: At the moment there are eleven of us. Zbigniew Kozłowski (co-director

[1] *Mountain Project* comprised three stages in Grodziec Castle (near Legnica): *Night Vigil* [*Nocne Czuwanie*] (27 September 1976 to 29 June 1977, 44 meetings), *The Way* [*Droga*] (6 April to 2 August 1977, 24 meetings), and *Mountain Project* [*Góra Płomienia*] (activities throughout 16 July to 2 August 1977). Artistic Director: Jacek Zmysłowski, co-directors: Zbigniew Kozłowski, Irena Rycyk, as well as Jadwiga Barczyk (the maiden name of Jadwiga M. Rodowicz), Leszek Słociński, and Janusz Szkandera. See: Zbigniew Osiński, 'Występy gościnne Teatru Laboratorium, 1959–1984. Kronika działalności 1978–1984' (Touring performances of the Teatr Laboratorium, 1959–1984. A Chronicle of Activities 1978–1984), *Pamiętnik Teatralny*, 1-4 (2000), 627-90 (p. 650). Eds.

[2] *Earth Project* was to be the next stage of work following *Mountain Project* but the idea was abandoned. *The Vigil*, which was the initial stage of *Earth Project*, took place for the first time in Wrocław on 15 November 1977. Eds.

of our *Projects*), Irena Rycyk, Małgorzata Świątek, Leszek Słociński, and Józef Szkandera are members of the Institute. The others – Katharina Seyferth from the Federal Republic of Germany, Jairo Cuesta from Colombia, Rick Feder from the United States, François Kahn from France, and Sen Yamamoto from Japan – have been collaborating with us for some months now and will stay in Poland until we have completed the first stage of work on *Earth Project*. We met the majority of them already when we led some workshops abroad; the others came to us in the summer last year during *Mountain Project*. This group is very culturally diverse, but this months-long encounter between us makes it possible to create actions that exist beyond cultural constraints. It is a kind of non-verbal activity, whose core lies beyond origins, language, age, or profession…

Jacek Zmysłowski during the late 1970s.
Photograph: Andrzej Paluchiewicz.

Burzyński: Before you move on to the activity itself, could you say something about yourself?

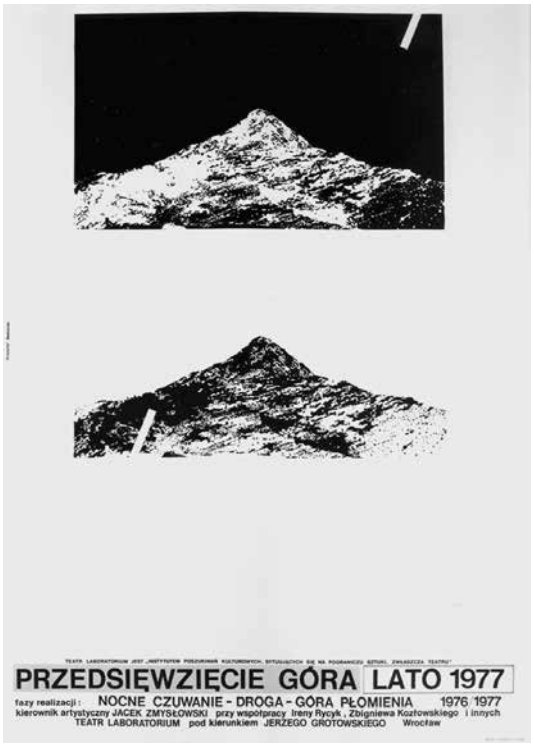
Zmysłowski: I'm twenty-four years old. I'm about to graduate in Polish studies under the auspices of Professor [Czesław] Hernas.[3] Alongside my studies, since 1973, I have been involved in the work of the Teatr Laboratorium. Namely, I participated in the first closed paratheatrical projects, two kinds of *Special Projects*: the narrower ones led by Grotowski and also Ryszard Cieślak's broader ones. Later – and this started in France in 1976, during activities led by a group of a few 'young' people who hadn't had any serious theatre experience – we discovered our own current, which went beyond the experience we had known earlier.[4] This wasn't planned, but appeared suddenly and unexpectedly during the work. The core of the group that I'm currently leading was constituted at that time.

Burzyński: Can we therefore, as a consequence of this extension of the company, talk about two different groups within the Laboratorium?

Zmysłowski: Yes, it's possible, but only in the sense that some of us have had some

[3] Czesław Hernas (1928-2003) was a Professor of Polish literature, a folklorist, and a specialist in the baroque period based at the University of Wrocław. He was a friend and associate of the Teatr Laboratorium. Eds.

[4] From 1 May to 30 July 1976, the Teatr Laboratorium ran the Centre of Grotowski *Stages* (Workshops) in La Tenaille in France. Among the various workshops led by the members of the theatre there were two called *Vers un Mont Parallèle* run by Zmysłowski in collaboration with Rycyk and Kozłowski. See Zbigniew Osiński, 'Występy gościnne Teatru Laboratorium, 1959–1984'. See the interview with Teo Spychalski, 'On the Long and Winding Road', elsewhere in this volume pp. 150-60 (pp. 156-57). Eds.



Poster for *Mountain Project*, designed by Krzysztof Bednarski.

Poster for *Night Vigil*, designed by Krzysztof Bednarski.

rich theatrical experience and others haven't had any – or their theatre encounters have been confined to amateur theatre. Initially, there was no division between 'old' and 'new'. For instance, we worked together in *Special Project* and the issue of who had what kind of professional preparation or had done whatever practice didn't matter; this experience was connected to a completely different type of disposition. At the moment, when the Laboratorium simultaneously runs several different training workshops and programmes, it seems natural that the paths of our older colleagues and our own should follow different routes, sometimes referring to the techniques and methods that were worked out previously in this theatre. But there are also convergent points, which we reach through different means. You can start from acting exercises or from activities associated with something else, but in the end these arrive at the same point in both cases, and this is what can be called – simplifying it to some extent – 'opening', the unblocking of the flow of energy. However, I would prefer not to go into detail about this work led by other people. The intensity of our group's work means we are unable to have a fuller insight into the whole.

Burzyński: What is the relationship between you [your group] and Grotowski? Was *Mountain Project* Grotowski's or Zmysłowski's creation?

Zmysłowski: Everything that happened at the *Mountain* was the creation (if we want to use this term) of all the participants, but the idea of *Mountain Project* itself was born quite a long time ago. Grotowski's text about it was published in *Odra* in 1975.[5] Some of the work initiated at *The University Of Research* [*Uniwersytet Poszukiwań*], and then in Italy and France was somehow a search leading towards the *Mountain* which brought closer the realisation of this idea.[6] In France, as I mentioned, Irena Rycyk, Zbyszek Kozłowski, and I led for many days an international group with very intense actions outdoors, that were

[5] '*Przedsięwzięcie Góra*. Project: The Mountain of Flame', *Odra*, 6 (1975), pp. 23-27 and also as *'Góra Płomienia*. Project: The Mountain of Flame' (Wrocław: Instytut Aktora – Teatr Laboratorium, 1975), pp. 1-8. The text was distributed in a leaflet format in Polish and English. Eds.

[6] The mention of Italy is a reference to *The University of Research II*, organised during the Venice Biennale from 22 September to 25 November 1975. Eds.

based on – to put it simply – movement, spatial perception through movement, and being in continuous movement in the space. That place and the extremely well-chosen group made this experience one of the fullest in which I have participated. Suddenly, it turned out that any special preparation of the location wasn't needed and that 'props', although they could have suggested and inspired the actions, did not have any meaning; too many objects and too much calculation. To keep only that which is indispensable, literally indispensable, for life.

It became possible to eliminate everything artificial, and what remained was the simplest relationship: the person-space – or more specifically, a person in the space and we as people in relation to each other. More or less at the same time, Grotowski entrusted us with the realisation of *Mountain Project*. Therefore, the work that followed, starting with *Night Vigils* (in a closed, indoor space) and *The Way* (literally – 'on the way') was conducted with us already thinking about the *Project* in the summer. Grotowski trusted us to penetrate this field, so we worked on our own, but – as the person overseeing all the Laboratorium's work – he had permanent access to what we were doing. He participated in the whole *Mountain Project* in its decisive phase.

Burzyński: I have tried a few times to write a journalistic report about *Special Project* and *Mountain Project*, among others. But I've encountered great difficulties, always being accompanied by a feeling of superficiality or distortion. I hadn't thought that language could be such an imperfect tool, at least when you try to express an experience that was *directly* lived-through. You look for metaphors, which do not necessarily make good literature, or analogies, which may cause misunderstanding. What if I asked you to help verbalise this experience?

Zmysłowski: I also dread formulating it. Everyone talks about their own experience using words appropriate to them, but they speak about the experience, which is engraved in them non-verbally and which remains beyond them. I'm also afraid that ultimately, pigeonholing it in words could destroy something that is very delicate and good (that comes from goodness), or that the ambiguity of words could damage everything or bring it down to a primitive banality. I also fear that someone could interpret my statements as being instructive, while it is quite the opposite – we don't use any instructions as introductions to the activities. Perhaps it is appropriate to talk indirectly, only touching on the essence of things? Beyond that, making this experience somehow objective is surely possible, but is it really needed?

Burzyński: You [the group] don't instruct, but you do talk to the people who, for example, apply to take part in *Vigils*. What do you tell them? What do you promise them?

Zmysłowski: I cannot promise anything. I try to dispel their theatrical hopes. And to tell them that there is nothing to watch, but that what is – or what could be – is experienced in a personal and active way. People come here with curiosity, with more or less accurate hunches, but also with a fear that paralyses. During this initial talk, you need to make at least one step towards mutual trust. I am also afraid, although I know roughly what I will encounter. Besides this, I provide some basic technical information. For instance, to come in comfortable and, preferably, old clothing and not in a suit, which it would be a shame to ruin or to make dirty.

Burzyński: When one crosses the threshold of the room in which *Vigils* takes place, a person is not only frightened but also has a feeling of defencelessness and helplessness…

Zmysłowski: This is natural. There is a poorly lit room; some figures sitting in silence on the floor. You don't know how to behave, so you wait for the first sign. You sit all stiff and tense, and you sink into yourself, uneasy, closed off from others. You lower your eyes or look around furtively… This phase, when from a visual perspective nothing is happening, is especially difficult. Both for the leaders and for the participants. It is a time for overcoming fear and slowly revealing

yourself through trust in yourself and others, and then slowly you enter the action which step-by-step is engulfing everyone. There is movement, voice, sound, and, sometimes, an instrument. And a completely empty room. It can happen – not always and not to everyone (which doesn't mean that someone hasn't given enough of themselves, but it can mean that we haven't been able to go out to meet this person) – that you cross a threshold beyond which everything planned, learned, and foreseen ends. Then we touch the unknown and at the same time touch something self-evident and natural; it carries [you]…

Burzyński: Is this a trance?

Zmysłowski: In our culture, the release of spontaneity or a burst of energy could be associated with a trance, although very imprecisely. If you enter into the action thinking in such terms, you are only able to realise our concept of a trance, but you're not able to find your own energy and spontaneity. This is the same as the stereotype that 'through rhythm you reach joy and great noise', which leads you to a dead-end and turns into a caricature of the rituals of primal societies; this is the easiest thing and requires no effort. Discovering your own sources is not based on imitating anything, but it needs to be a continuous search by yourself and within yourself (in your own body) for what is really yours. If we are searching through movement – this movement becomes a continuous question. And this is where real processes, which we call 'creative', start. This bodily action can also be a kind of creative action.

Burzyński: For the sake of simplicity, let's focus on the movement. What does this kind of experience give to a person?

Zmysłowski: It is as if a person suddenly discovers that a movement exists, discovers their body in movement and that they can actually be in it, remain in it; you discover that this kind of energy, which you do not encounter in everyday life, exists within the body. For some people such an experience is completely unknown. The simplest and almost the most immediate reaction is to relish it and the joy that comes from the discovery of these unknown resources, and then from searching through movement for others, approaching them; collaboration, improvisations. Then you discover that this experience sharpens your touch, sight, hearing, all the senses in fact; they are restored to full sensitivity. Sometimes the actions change into something like child's play, funny and 'silly', something that we would rather avoid in normal situations. Sometimes there is an eruption of joy, vibrating and 'mad'. It happens in various ways as everyone is different and the groups vary too.

Burzyński: Does it happen that sometimes somebody joins in – despite sensing some inner resistance – because it would be silly for them to remain on the side? Does this not mean that breaking conventions becomes the new convention?

Zmysłowski: I can't say that such situations haven't happened. We try to prevent this during the actions and I warn the participants of such a danger when I talk to them. Every forced action brings not only the threat of a distortion of one's presence, but it is also dangerous to others – physically. For very often at such times you walk into somebody; the movement either becomes calculated or it's limited to being an imitation. When the movement is an organic action of the body, such things do not happen. This might seem strange, but this really is what happens.

Burzyński: Aren't your activities a kind of asylum away from life, a search for a moment of oblivion, an escape from the reality, or an alternative form of life for some people?

Zmysłowski: Anyone who hasn't entered wholly into the action, but has found in it a kind of relaxing and momentary escape from their everyday business, cannot be harmed by this experience. Can it be a moment of oblivion? Perhaps, but it's different from being under the influence of alcohol, for example. Sometimes you can compare it to giving yourself a 'spring clean'. Sometimes – although this is beyond any therapeutic

For Jacek Zmysłowski

Chinese pagoda
a little bridge over the stream
islets of pebbles
trees bent over the water
a yawning duck swimming against the current
the air's heavy smell
invisible people
waiting on benches
nobody knows what for
sleepy kids chasing butterflies

and a sunny boy
running with a spear

STEFANIA GARDECKA

TRANSLATED BY GRZEGORZ ZIÓŁKOWSKI WITH PAUL ALLAIN

intentions on our part as we are not competent to provide this function – it helps some people overcome their complexes by recognising their real abilities. It cannot, however, be an alternative to life, because our projects also belong to life. Yet they are situated on the opposite pole from the mundane.

Burzyński: You are currently working on *Earth Project*, which comprises several phases. The initial one is the *Vigils*. From a series of meetings which are, in fact, accessible to everyone, you will choose some participants who will then take part in your open-air activities over many days, divided into two phases: *Doing* [*Czynienie*] and *Village* [*Wioska*]. I am aware of the various constraints you have, although there is something unpleasant about such a selection and the narrowing of the circle of 'the initiated'.

Zmysłowski: At some stage in our post-theatrical activity, the circle of people who had access to our activities was indeed small. But that initial phase required such limitations. However, if you begin with *The University of Research*, you cannot in fact speak about the 'circle of the initiated'. *Openings* [*Otwarcia*], a project we did in 1975, was accessible to almost everyone who applied. I can say that we have been trying for a few years now to expand the possibilities for people to take part in our work. A few dozen people could take part in our *Special Project*, but hundreds have already participated in *Mountain Project*.

Also, it was not without significance that in the *Night Vigils* – which ran regularly a few times a month – anyone could take part, without any restrictions. That is why the largest number of participants experienced this project. There is now a similar situation with the *Vigils*, which is available not only to those who are ready to be fully active.

We also received a proposition to lead such meetings beyond Wrocław and we are organising a series of *Vigils* in Wybrzeże [a coastal district of Poland].[7] The future phases of this project are much more an expedition into the unknown. Besides, they would require us to leave Wrocław for a few days and this means that not everyone wants to do this, is able to go, or is willing to begin such an adventure.

The realisation of *Earth Project* is planned over two years; the first stage of the work will be completed this year. Next year, we will be away from Wrocław more often working on *Doing* and at the final stage, on *Village*. I think that a large section of those who want to take part in this kind of experience will have the chance to do so. It is just a matter of the time and conditions in which we will act. If something is to come out of what we call 'active culture' and if this is to become a widespread experience, there is the need to test many possibilities and examine this field thoroughly. This is why our outpost is called an institute; besides we are not searching alone, but with the active participation of people from outside our small group.

TRANSLATED BY JUSTYNA DROBNIK-ROGERS

[7] This was realised from 2 to 17 May 1978 at the Pałac Opatów (Abbots' Palace) in Gdańsk Oliwa. See: Zbigniew Osiński, 'Występy gościnne Teatru Laboratorium', p. 654. Also see: ts [T. Skutnik], 'Teatr Laboratorium w Gdańsku', *Punkt*, 7 (1979), 202-04. Eds.

I Had Four Fathers

IRENA RYCYK-BRILL

IRENA RYCYK-BRILL (née Rycyk) (1950-2013) joined the Teatr Laboratorium after a selection in November 1970. She was among the creators of *Holiday* in June 1973 and in September and October the same year took part in *Grotowski Special Project* in Pennsylvania, USA. In spring 1974, she was among Grotowski's assistants for *Narrow Special Project* in Armidale, Australia. In summer 1975, she was involved in the activities of *The University of Research of the Theatre of Nations* [*Uniwersytet Poszukiwań Teatru Narodów*] in Wrocław, and in November the same year she assisted Ryszard Cieślak in his *Special Project* at the Venice Biennale. In May 1976, she assisted Cieślak and in June Jacek Zmysłowski at their sessions in La Tenaille in France, during the Laboratorium's activities there. In summer 1977, she co-led *Mountain Project* directed by Zmysłowski, before collaborating with him on *The Vigils* [*Czuwania*]. In 1979, she co-created the Laboratorium's *Tree of People* and in 1981, she was involved in *Polish Thanatos* [*Thanatos polski*]. In 1982-1983 she led work sessions in Germany, UK, Italy, France, and continued to assist Cieślak. She was a member of the Teatr Laboratorium until 1984, and later lived in Frankfurt am Main, where she died in 2013.

This text was originally published as 'Miałam czterech ojców', ed. by Grzegorz Janikowski, *Pamiętnik Teatralny*, 1-2 (2001), 188-200.

I had four fathers in my life: my dad Józef Rycyk, my father-in-law Erich Brill, a godfather, and a spiritual father. Jerzy Grotowski was my spiritual father, and although I've gained much from my family home, it was he who taught me the most. I was lucky enough to be the daughter of a Byelorussian woman from nearby Grodno, who was brought up in the [Russian] Orthodox faith, and of an artist-musician from Zamojszczyzna, who played clarinet in the Filharmonia Narodowa (National Philharmonic Orchestra) in Warsaw.[1]
I was lucky enough to be in the Teatr Laboratorium.

The Qualifying Round

My three lean years were coming to an end. I was in a mime company run by Aleksander Jochwed[2] (we worked in Dziekanka[3] and had a premiere at the Stodoła Club).[4] This was where Andrzej Baranowski[5] ran his theatre and I took part in his

[1] Zamojszczyzna is a region in southeast Poland, of which the largest town is Zamość. Trans.
[2] Aleksander Jochwed (b. 1942) is an actor, director, and pedagogue. He was active in the theatre and the Hybrydy cabaret in Warsaw in the 1960s and then studied mime at Étienne Decroux's school in Paris (from 1967 to 1968). In 1971, he moved to Denmark where he developed experimental theatre for more than thirty years. Eds.
[3] The Dziekanka (Dean's House) is a dormitory situated on Krakowskie Przedmieście in Warsaw for students of the Akademia Muzyczna (Music Academy), as well as for other arts and theatre students. Trans.
[4] This is a legendary student club in Warsaw created in 1956, known for organising all kinds of artistic events. Trans.
[5] Andrzej Baranowski (b. 1950) is a Polish actor who has worked in repertory theatres in Warsaw and Łódź. Trans.

performance along with three other actors who recited [Tadeusz] Różewicz[6] (Andrzej Matul was one of them).[7]

I also started studying amateur theatre directing part-time. I still didn't have a permanent job, so couldn't study full-time.

One of my sisters arranged for me to stand in for a barmaid at the Dom Kultury (Culture House) in Targówek, during the holidays.[8] The work really appealed to me: I made coffee and tea for guests and had the chance to observe many interesting situations. Besides, it also gave me some pocket money.

One day there, at a table in the bar, a group of educational instructors was preparing a special programme for a so-called *akademia*.[9] I overheard them say they were looking for somebody to recite poetry. I offered do a recitation for the event. When the *akademia* started, I closed up the bar, took off my apron, and went through the back door directly onto the stage. I recited the poems and went back to tending bar. The instructors were very impressed and said that they hadn't come across such talent before.

A few days afterwards, one of them (who was connected professionally with the theatre and who hadn't been present at this *akademia*) said to me, almost ironically, that there was an announcement in [the journal] *Przekrój* that Grotowski was looking for amateurs to collaborate with him.[10]

I sought out this issue straightaway. The short announcement stated clearly that Grotowski was looking for people and requested a letter of interest.

I thought about this letter for two weeks, not knowing how to address him. At last, I wrote 'Dear Master' – and not long afterwards I received a reply from Wrocław with information about when and where I should go for a four-day qualifying meeting (by then I was working as an educational instructor at the culture house in Bródno, run by Mr Skiba).[11]

I travelled to Wrocław by train and I remember experiencing a strong rheumatic pain in my arms. My sister asked what repertoire I had prepared for Grotowski and in reply I just smiled ironically. I knew this wasn't what he was expecting from me.

The Teatr Laboratorium in Wrocław: the reality was beyond any expectations. What happened during those four days…[12]

The second qualifying round took place about a year later.

---

[6] Tadeusz Różewicz (1921-2014) was a well-known Polish writer, poet, and playwright. He is considered one of the most eminent post-war poets and dramatists. His works have been translated into English as well as many other languages. Trans.

[7] Andrzej Matul (b. 1947) is a Polish journalist and public figure, known partly for his programmes for Polish Radio as well as his dubbing for Polish television. Trans.

[8] Targówek is a district of northeast Warsaw. Trans.

[9] *Akademia* signifies in Polish a special celebration of certain historical, cultural, or religious events. It is practised in every Polish school and can be understood as the equivalent of an assembly. Trans.

[10] *Przekrój* (Cross-Section) is the longest-running Polish weekly news magazine, published since 1945, with texts by many eminent writers and poets. Trans. [Rycyk-Brill is referring to 'Propozycja współpracy Teatru Laboratorium' (Proposal to Collaborate with the Teatr Laboratorium), *Przekrój* 1327 (13 September 1970), 8. The same text, co-prepared by Teo Spychalski, was published earlier in *Sztandar Młodych* 217 (10 September 1970), 5, and in *Słowo Polskie* 215 (10 September 1970), 4. Eds.]

[11] Bródno is a neighbourhood in Targówek. Trans.

[12] From 2-6 November 1970, Jerzy Grotowski met with seventy people who were chosen from a group of several hundred applicants responding to the press announcement published in September 1970. As a result, ten people were chosen to take part in the training; Irena Rycyk was one of them.

The Art of Waking up

By nature, I'm an early-bird type, while Grotowski was a typical night owl who worked almost exclusively at night. This caused me some physical difficulties, especially during our first years working together.[13] Thankfully, in the beginning, in 1970, our group of young people worked only every other day. On alternate days, our older colleagues used the room.

I suspect that Grotowski led this lifestyle up until the end: he combined a typical nighttime disposition with very intensive work, as I recall. He used to attach great importance to waking up. It was he, not my father, who taught me how to wake up properly. According to Grotowski, waking up had to be done with tact – and with an obligatory coffee brought to you in bed.

An Individual Meeting with Grotowski in Brzezinka, 1975

Grotowski arranged to meet me in Brzezinka.[14] I arrived there first. I lit a fire in the hearth and prepared some tea at Dziadek's (Grandfather's) house.[15] Grot came from the edge of the wood (from the northwest). He didn't stay long; he took me into the woods for a short stroll. I think it was night. He led me through the woods and all the time he kept asking me what side such-and-such a 'thing' was on. My answer was wrong every time. I couldn't place this 'thing' he was asking about.

After returning to Brzezinka we sat in the main space. Grotowski spoke briefly. He said he didn't have the time to wait, to wait for me to grow up for him.

We went our separate ways and I returned to Wrocław racking my brain about what he had meant. It was clear he was speaking about the closeness of death, but I couldn't understand why. I didn't understand our Master. I fell into a kind of depression for three months. And then at last I started working with Ryszard [Cieślak] in Brzezinka.

Collaboration with Ryszard Cieślak on 'Special Project'

In Brzezinka a group of us young people were to prepare a 'meeting' suitable for a large group of participants.[16] Jadwiga and Tomek [Tomasz] Rodowicz were there.[17] Ryszard ran the work: he managed everything but didn't actively take part in the event. Teresa

---

[13] Only after years of our work did I become indifferent to whether it was in fact day or night. This is what I said in Pontedera in 1989 in reply to François Kahn's question about sleep and the rhythm of our work. [Kahn was a French participant and work leader in paratheatre and Theatre of Sources. Eds.]

[14] This meeting must have taken place in March 1975.

[15] This was a small wooden hut built by Władysław Graczyk (nicknamed 'Dziadek') next to the main Brzezinka building. It had a fireplace-cum-oven installed for cooking meals, as there was no kitchen in the main building, which was designated for work and silent rest only. Eds.

[16] The word 'meeting' appears in English in the original Polish text by Rycyk-Brill. Trans.

[17] Jadwiga M. Rodowicz (now Rodowicz-Czechowska) is a Japanese theatre expert and has served as Polish ambassador to Japan. Tomasz Rodowicz now leads the Chorea Theatre Association, based in Łódź. Both worked with the Gardzienice Theatre Association for many years, Tomasz as musical director and a key long-term collaborator. Recently, Rodowicz directed *Grotowski – próba odwrotu* (Grotowski: An Attempt at Withdrawal; premiere on 13 August 2010) with Chorea, in which he re-examines his relationship with Grotowski. Eds.

From the left: Irena Rycyk, Zbigniew Kozłowski, Antoni Jahołkowski, Stanisław Scierski, Rena Mirecka, and Teresa Nawrot during rehearsals for *Polish Thanatos* (1980). Photograph: Jan Krzysztof Fiołek.

[Nawrot], Antek [Antoni Jahołkowski], and I were the executors.[18] Staszek [Stanisław Scierski] was working on his own project at that time.

It was the first time that I had worked so intensively with Ryszard: twenty-four hours a day. His youthful enthusiasm made my earlier worries from Wrocław evaporate. I was happy again, perhaps even happier than before.

Ryszard was putting his 'baroque' visions into practice. It was a time of blazing earth, crazy dances to the sound of drumming, jumping onto a net hung over the river – a time of aromatic apples in the mill and shelters smelling of magic [pine] needles.

I ran in the ice-cold stream. I was inspired by the movement of some small blue birds I'd observed flying above it. The ice-cold water made my legs feel like wooden sticks. A moment's inattention and I could have injured myself. But it never happened. The work was composed in such a way that on the riverbank there was always a cosy nest of kind, warm people waiting for us.

The work was entwined with music. We sang songs we knew or ones we'd compose and improvise spontaneously. We were nearly always accompanied on the guitar. I remember that Iga [Jadwiga] Rodowicz created the most beautiful songs. 'Przyszedł do mnie

[18] After graduating in acting at the PWST (State Higher Theatre School) in Warsaw, Nawrot joined the Teatr Laboratorium on 1 July 1971 and worked in the company until its voluntary dissolution in 1984. In 1978 she performed in *Huśtawka* (The Swing), an episode of the TV series *Układ krążenia* (The Cardiovascular System; directed by Andrzej Titkow). In the 1980s she founded her own drama school in Berlin. For more on the school see <http://www.reduta-berlin.de>. Eds.

mały konik, mały konik będzie rósł' (A Foal came up to me, the Foal will Grow) or 'Bóg się rodzi w białym koniu' (God is Born in a White Horse). She also had a beautiful, high-pitched voice. After about a week of preparation, a large group of people arrived.[19] It included an old friend of ours, a journalist from America.[20] Reviewing the project on the spot, she accused us of not including enough sex. We laughed about this a lot.

The earth smelled unimaginably beautiful. Ryszard's work was bursting with amazing – and consequently beautiful – ideas. There wasn't much time for quiet moments. Perhaps only at night, when in the open meadow we started to build small bonfires, with participants and a work leader gathering around each of them.

Each extensive session with the participants, probably lasting at least twenty-four hours, ended with us walking the group through the forest to the road, where a bus was waiting to collect them. I walked alongside them and many times tears streamed from my eyes; this was my reaction to experiencing something beautiful.

Later we would find out that friendships had developed between the participants, sometimes ending in marriage. We were emissaries of love; today such a role has been taken over by singles ads.

A few kilometres away from us, in Ostrowina, Teo Spychalski was working with a group of foreigners on the project *Song of Myself*.[21] Apparently, one day they came to sneak a look at us, and it gave them a complex. The breadth and colourfulness of our work overwhelmed them.

After the series of work cycles with Ryszard, one article, among several others, appeared in print, in the journal *Kultura*.[22] It was written by one of the participants of *Special Project* and I couldn't forgive myself that this person had been allowed to take part (Jacek Zmysłowski and I had made the selection decisions about who was to participate). At one point, the author wrote: 'In the meadow, we drank milk in the natural way'. This sentence shocked me such that I didn't finish reading the article. Ryszard tried to comfort me. He knew very well the difficulties in describing our work.

Venice 1975

Our three-month stay in Venice for me was one of our most beautiful trips abroad.[23] The atmosphere of the city was unique. At first, when from a vaporetto I saw the damaged plaster of the houses and the Venetian blinds on the houses that stood in the water, I felt as though I was in a graveyard. At the first opportunity, I went to the

---

[19] The first group of participants of *Special Project*, run by Ryszard Cieślak, arrived in Brzezinka on 27 June 1975.

[20] Presumably Rycyk-Brill is referring to Margaret Croyden, who wrote about these experiences in her book *In the Shadow of the Flame: Three Journeys* (New York: Continuum, 1993). Eds.

[21] From 21 June to 6 July 1976, Teo Spychalski ran seven two-day work sessions for foreign participants, in Ostrowina. Sixty-two people took part in this work. See Zbigniew Osiński, *Grotowski i jego Laboratorium* (Warsaw: Państwowy Instytut Wydawniczy, 1980), p. 375. See also the interview with Spychalski, 'On the Long and Winding Road', elsewhere in this volume, pp. 150-60 (pp. 155).

[22] Rycyk-Brill probably means Maciej Karpiński's ironic text: 'Anty-Grotowski', *Kultura*, 44 (2 November 1975), 11–12. Eds.

[23] From 22 September to 25 November 1975 the Teatr Laboratorium group ran the so-called *The University of Research II* [*Uniwersytet Poszukiwań II*] during the Venice Biennale.

Ryszard Cieślak, Władysław Graczyk ('Dziadek' – Grandfather), and Aleksander Lidtke at Brzezinka.
Photograph: Andrzej Paluchiewicz.

Lido, a piece of real land in Venice. I ran among the beech trees and was happy I could feel earth beneath my feet. The initial impression of a dying city soon disappeared. I started to discover Venice's charm and particularity.

I worked with Jacek Zmysłowski and Włodek [Włodzimierz] Staniewski.[24] My collaboration with Włodek was interesting as it was mainly rooted in organising the project. This meant I had to ensure the necessary external conditions were secured: I did the shopping and kept in touch with the island (the place of work), and I did everything that Włodek needed.[25] Sometimes I also participated in the artistic work. [...]

During the creative process, we would become great poets, composers, and performers. We would become human beings with the pure beauty of a 'person without a shell', [a pureness] so often damaged by our civilisation. We confirmed the maxim 'proud to be a human being'.

During the process we would become ideological creators of the artistic potential given to us by nature. We would reach our creative limits. Such moments formed part of a long-term and laborious search for artistic truth, which we attained after many hours of rehearsals, by separating the sheep from the goats, [...] and saving our findings as elements of a future performance.

---

[24] Włodzimierz Staniewski (b. 1950) has been artistic director of Gardzienice Theatre Association since its beginning in 1977. For more on the company see: <http://www.gardzienice.art.pl>. Eds.

[25] From 28 October 1975, Włodzimierz Staniewski organised the preparation of the *Stage Générale* (Laboratorium ogólne/General Laboratory), which took place from 1-5 November the same year. Meetings with Italian theatre groups took place on the island of San Giacomo in Paludo. See Osiński, *Grotowski i jego Laboratorium*, p. 376. [It was in Venice that Włodzimierz Staniewski broke with Jerzy Grotowski before going on to establish the Gardzienice Theatre Association. See Flaszen, *Grotowski & Company*, ed. by Paul Allain with Monika Blige, trans. by Andrzej Wojtasik with Paul Allain (Abingdon and New York: Routledge Icarus, 2013), pp. 301-02. Eds.]

In such moments, skin-colour, race, or nationality almost evaporated; they weren't important; they ceased to exist. We were identical then, although we had diverse religions and backgrounds, and had grown up on different continents, in many different countries and cultures. It was unimportant whether somebody believed in Shiva, *vodou* deities, or was a protestant from Western Europe – we were all the same, identical. We were the same heart, beating and separated by an unnecessary layer of stone. As Leonardo da Vinci said: 'Every stone has a sculpture within it, you just need to remove the layers that are not needed'.[26]

In Venice, for the first time, I felt I wasn't walking but skimming along the ground like a hovercraft. It was in Venice that I told Grotowski only then did I understand my work and place in the Teatr Laboratorium (I was twenty-five at the time). He replied that my age meant it may be too late for him to shape me as his worker and as an animator of paratheatrical activities. He had the courage to base his work on very young people. Only Grotowski could afford to do that. He wasn't afraid of youthfulness, about which he used to joke that it was like measles, an ordeal you need to get through, and that already in the Stone Age there were cave inscriptions bemoaning 'Oh, the youth of today… In our day…'

I was convinced of Grotowski's remarkable personality. Sometimes I even let my imagination wander, and assumed he'd been sent from the cosmos and that one day a religion would be founded on faith in him.

These were the kind of speculations I made as a young person fascinated by Grotowski's individuality, his intelligence, and his personality. I know today that I was very lucky to have met Him and I'm glad that he moulded the person I am today out of this lumpen clay.

Of course, sometimes I regretted that he did not turn me into a great actor or director; instead, he equipped me for life, giving me great insight and sensitivity towards the arts. I can live peacefully, experiencing a profound intensity and at the same time meet my greater and lesser needs. What more is required? I am happy.

Tree of People

A new phase of work with a group of the 'elders' begins, called *Tree of People*. Teresa Nawrot is with us, but there is no Teo Spychalski.[27] Zbigniew Cynkutis organises the work. We arrange all the projects in the main [Laboratorium] premises at Rynek-Ratusz 27 [in Wrocław].[28]

I collaborate closely with Ludwik Flaszen. From the very beginning of *Tree of People* I'm in my element. During the first phase, which lasts up to two hours, I'm able to

[26] This phrase is in fact more usually associated with Michelangelo. Eds.

[27] See the interview with Spychalski, p. 159. Eds.

[28] The project *Tree of People*, which was called a 'work-river', was realised between 1979 and 1981. The first version (in which Teo Spychalski participated) took place in Wrocław between 4 and 12 January 1979. According to Rycyk-Brill's statements, she refers to the second (6–8 April 1979) and the third (12–14 April) realisations of this project, which took place in the Teatr Laboratorium's space, already without Spychalski. See Zbigniew Osiński, 'Występy gościnne Teatru Laboratorium 1959-1984. Kronika działalności 1978-1984', *Pamiętnik Teatralny*, 1-4 (2000), 657-68.

Rehearsals for *Polish Thanatos*. In the foreground: Irena Rycyk and Antoni Jahołkowski.
Photograph: Jan Krzysztof Fiołek.

manage a crowd of participants (about seventy people), who have arrived in our studio. This means being able to guide those people who don't know each other and have arrived at the theatre directly from the street, people who have been provoked into some activity, in a spontaneous improvisation steered by us.

The initial activity lasts for a certain period and finishes as the action quietens down. After about two hours, I'm able to get a feel for each of the participants. After this fragment of movement, which is the 'flux' of human existence, I'm able to say something about each of the participants. I'm able to recognise this with my 'sixth sense'. I'm able to recognise the potential and the creative abilities of the group's individual members. I prompt them to improvise, but I'm also guided by the motto 'to search for what is best in you'.

At this time, I'm able to recognise the character, the individual features, the weaknesses, and the strengths of the people I encounter in everyday life, even on the streets. I read this from their movement. I focus on abilities linked to their physical rather than their intellectual potential.

I begin to be trained as a leader. We start a period of numerous travels abroad.

Polish Thanatos, Music, Cigarettes, and Me

Again, I work with old friends.[29] Of the younger ones, only Teresa Nawrot (Grotowski's personal artistic secretary from 1975 to 1976) and Zbyszek [Zbigniew] Kozłowski

[29] The rehearsals for a new 'dramatic event' entitled *Po dostojewsku* (In a Dostoevskian Manner) began on 5 January 1981 in Olsztyn (at Pracownia Stowarzyszenia Społeczno-Kulturalnego Pojezierze – a Workshop associated with the 'Lakeland' Socio-Cultural Association). Open presentations of the performance under the revised title *Polish Thanatos: Incantations* took place between 28 February and 6 March 1981. See Tadeusz Kornaś, '*Thanatos polski* w Teatrze Laboratorium', *Pamiętnik Teatralny*, 1–4 (2000), 272–83, and Osiński, 'Występy gościnne Teatru Laboratorium 1959–1984. Kronika działalności 1978–1984', p. 667.

are present. Ryszard [Cieślak] led the rehearsals. I recall a rehearsal in which we improvised for a long time. Ryszard turned on a tape recorder, looking to capture something. And with his typical enthusiasm, at the end of the rehearsal he called out 'I've got it!' It was when Antoni Jahołkowski was improvising. We started listening to the tape. Somewhere in the background was Antek's thin-as-a-reed voice singing 'ziemia, oj ziemia, tyle zmęczenia' (Earth, oh, Earth, there is so much fatigue). This is how the song at the beginning of the performance [of *Polish Thanatos*] came about.

Antek helped me a lot with looking for a melody to accompany [Rafał] Wojaczek's[30] poem 'Ile kwiatów, tyle światów' (However Many Flowers, So There Are Worlds)...[31] I didn't have any problems finding a melody for the verse. As usual, I created something doleful. I never struggled with that. A few chords on the guitar, and a wistful but also slightly dull melody would emerge. And suddenly Antek popped into the room and said that it should go like this: 'On the banks of the great water of our weariness, | we were waiting for a sign that would brighten our eyes | with delight and with great humility'.[32] I was so glad. This new section enabled the melody to reach higher tones and the rhythm to become more aggressive.

A second song was created as well. Rena Mirecka brought the ready-made words and music of 'Bożyczku'.[33] Three of us, [all] women, sang it. This little song brought me so much joy, and in some places I could sing it in the second voice thanks to my natural disposition. My father recognised this ability when I sang well-known, young people's cover-songs from the radio. He discovered in me this very rare capacity to follow the melody through background instrumentation. This might have something to do with my limited vocal abilities. I had a narrow vocal range, but somehow sought to express the beauty of the given piece. My sense of rhythm had a tendency towards syncopation and varied rhythmical and melodic backing. I used to love singing... Chopin. Of course in the second voice, with a bit added here and there.

I mastered playing the Jew's harp. My talent surfaced during the project *Night Vigil* [*Nocne czuwania*], led by Jacek Zmysłowski, in which, besides myself and the others, the following people also took part: Leszek Śliwiński, Janusz Szkandera, Małgorzata Świątek, Sen Yamamoto, François Kahn, Katharina Seyferth, and Zbyszek [Zbigniew] Kozłowski.[34] I played while humming and singing. My colleague Leszek Sławiński told me I should make a recording. I have this recording at home to this day. Sometimes I reach for it, mainly to play some well-known pieces to my guests. I do it to give some pleasure to the listeners, because I still believe – maybe wrongly – that the ability to play melodies on the Jew's harp is a rarity. It isn't easy or obvious.

[30] Rafał Wojaczek (1945-1971) was a famous Polish poet whose work is often compared to that of Rimbaud. Trans.

[31] This poem was published in the 1970 collection *Inna bajka* (literally: 'another fairytale', or – colloquially – 'something different'). Trans.

[32] In Polish: 'Na brzegu wielkiej wody naszego znużenia | czekaliśmy na znak, aby oczy nam rozjaśnił | zachwytem i zarazem ogromną pokorą'. This is a fragment of Rafał Wojaczek's poem entitled 'Na brzegu wielkiej wody' (On the Banks of the Great Water), published in the 1970 collection *Inna bajka*. Eds.

[33] The title 'Bożyczku' is impossible to translate literally into English. It is a diminutive of the word 'God', used in the vocative case, as in a direct address. Trans.

[34] It is not clear if the author is referring to *Night Vigils* [*Nocne Czuwania*] led by Jacek Zmysłowski between 27 September 1976 and 29 June 1977 in Grodziec Castle as the first phase of *Mountain Project* [*Przedsięwzięcie Góra*], or to *Vigils* [*Czuwania*], led by Zmysłowski from 15 November 1977 until December 1979. Eds.

The Jew's harp was my chosen instrument, but I bought a guitar in 1975 when I was in Venice. One girl was going to Rome and she offered to get me a guitar there. [...] Unfortunately, to my surprise, she bought a rhythm guitar not a classical guitar. My fingers ached from the steel strings, and the neck was narrow. This is why I never learned to play it properly. Of course, I strummed out chords and the guitar gradually became a friend to my ailing voice. Now, I don't sing at all. Rather, I smoke about a pack and a half of cigarettes a day.

The subject of giving up smoking used to crop up quite often. Grotowski once said 'Because I'm weak, I need to stop smoking altogether. If I were strong, I could reduce my smoking instead'. As usual, it was difficult to say how much of this was a joke and how much a compulsion just to look for reasons to smile. But the fact is that Grotowski really gave up smoking, and kept this up for many years. [...]

More about *Thanatos*

Ryszard continued to insist that the spectators participate in some fragments of the performance. I disliked this type of directing and felt forced within such a creative form, but I fulfilled my tasks as best I could. The spectators' participation seemed a kind of embarrassment to me. Intuitively, I wanted them to be left alone, at a safe, physical distance from everything that happened within the work.

Finally, Grotowski graced us with his presence. As usual, he entered the studio like a shadow, and later, 'as usual', he took his usual seat on one side, with his inseparable rucksack, which he called his 'wife'. He was attentive and quiet. When the performance ended, Grotowski didn't say a word to me. But I was more and more certain with each day and after every rehearsal (whether we were alone or with an invited audience) that *Thanatos* would one day become real theatre. After a dozen or so years at the Teatr Laboratorium, I finally got the opportunity to become an actor. It was as though somebody had lent me wings.[35]

There were only a few showings. Antek's health deteriorated.[36] The summer holiday came; and with it the summer break in the theatre's activities.

I was afraid. For the first time in my life, I was afraid about the future. Years later, I realised that this fear was caused by my illness, which was already developing. It was a fear arising in the deep layers of my subconscious.

After the summer, we returned to work. Ryszard led rehearsals again. Antek was no longer with us...[37]

During one of the training sessions, I was surprised when I found it difficult to do a headstand. Only years later, after my diagnosis in 1985, did I find out what had caused this balance disorder.

---

[35] After one of the open rehearsals with audience participation, I met Józef Kelera [a Wrocław theatre critic] in the *Rynek* (main Market Square) and he asked me 'How did you learn to fly?'

[36] Antoni Jahołkowski suffered from stomach cancer. At that period the pain was increasing.

[37] Antoni Jahołkowski died on 1 September 1981. His funeral took place on 8 September 1981 at the Grabiszyński Cemetery in Wrocław.

Teresa Nawrot (standing), Irena Rycyk, and Rena Mirecka (sitting) in rehearsal for *Polish Thanatos*. Observers (from the left): Ludwik Flaszen and Ryszard Cieślak.
Photograph: Jan Krzysztof Fiołek.

We continued to work, because it was our inner order, the obvious thing to do. Never to stop. I think Ryszard was searching for new colleagues to work with. They were mainly young men we had met and got to know.

I sang and played guitar. Ryszard was critical about it. In some spare moment, I met Teresa and tried to persuade her to do a performance with me. I said to her: 'Teresa, you have long dark hair, I have short blond hair. The two of us women – it'll be great!' We began rehearsing. We both brought ideas for text. I was still hooked by [Marek] Grechuta's song 'Stwardnieje ci łza, stwardnieje ci marzenie i będą twarde jak skała i będą twarde jak lód' (Your tears will harden, your dream will harden, and they will be hard like rock and they will be hard like ice).[38] (Perhaps it wasn't a coincidence that I'd soon be diagnosed with multiple sclerosis?)[39] The fragment of Teresa's text was 'What will be, will be'. Teresa's interest in collective work and rehearsals didn't match my own. She wanted to be independent and to become a leader. Soon, she began to collaborate on Staszek [Stanisław] Scierski's project. She was completely exhausted, but happy. She was learning to become a leader. She left me alone. I became 'the lover of the Great Bear'.[40]

[38] Marek Grechuta (1945-2006) was a very popular Polish songwriter, singer, composer, and lyricist. Trans.

[39] In Polish, multiple sclerosis is known as 'stwardnienie rozsiane' – literally a 'dispersed' or 'general' 'hardening'. Trans.

[40] Sergiusz Piasecki's book *Kochanek Wielkiej Niedźwiedzicy* (The Lover of the Great Bear, 1937) was a gift from Paris that I received from Jerzy Grotowski in 1988. [The book depicts the realities of the Polish/Soviet borderland during the 1920s. Eds.]

Injuries and Ryszard Cieślak

Injuries happened in our work. Ryszard Cieślak had most of them. One of the best-known stories concerns him breaking a bone in his foot during one of the tours abroad. Ryszard would get anaesthetic splints and would do the performance anyway; he'd play the role of *The Constant Prince* and would go back to the hotel and suffer greatly from the pain. Ryszard said that Ludwik Flaszen would visit him there and try to help with the pain. And, outrageously, Flaszen would tell the suffering Ryszard his own stories of having a runny nose and how his family was concerned about it… Ryszard used to tell this anecdote years later. It was hard to imagine Ludwik showing such a 'lack of sensitivity', as I call it. How could anyone recount their (comparatively) trivial ailments to somebody suffering from unimaginable pain?

Once I broke my nose during work with François Liège (this was when I became 'bent out of shape').[41]

Doctor Baron from Wrocław's AWF was our resident theatre doctor. Grotowski had met him one day on a train, on the way to a medical conference.[42] On his jacket, Dr Baron wore a badge depicting a Trichomonas parasite. Grotowski found this Trichomonas very amusing – again, for him it was a good reason to laugh.

I visited Dr Baron only once, when the symptoms of my multiple sclerosis were becoming clearly apparent. I asked him, 'Please can you do an X-Ray of my whole spine? Something is wrong with my nerves'. The results were ready after a few days. Dr Baron said to me, 'Your spine is exemplary'. So, it wasn't down to some mechanical damage of the spinal cord. I also went to see Włodek's ex-wife Danuta Staniewska, who worked in the lab of a hospital near the Dom Aktora (Actors' House), where we lived. 'Please could you give me an anti-streptolysin test?' To my surprise, it turned out that there was no trace of the rheumatism from my youth.

I continued to work and study. By then, I was over thirty years old.

Searching

A continuous struggle with breaks for sleeping. Did we actually consider our 'searching' a fight in those days? We would meet at rehearsals to search. At some point, even this very notion annoyed me. In order to search, you need to know what you're looking for, and sometimes I felt I had no idea.

I associate Rena Mirecka with this phenomenon. She never gave up her searching; now, in my life, I don't give up, because although I've celebrated my fiftieth birthday, I still need to fight for every day, for every minute…

The most unusual thing was that each of us already had completely different experiences in our individual work by the time we came together for *Thanatos*. There were the 'elders', professional actors, Teresa Nawrot, and Zbyszek [Zbigniew] Kozłowski and I, who remained from the recruiting of the amateurs in 1970; nevertheless, it

[41] François Liège collaborated with Teo Spychalski from 1976 and participated in Theatre of Sources. Eds.

[42] AWF stands for the Akademia Wychowania Fizycznego (Academy of Physical Education). Trans.

seemed we all had the same kind of sensitivity in the work. It was possible for Rena Mirecka, who had many years' experience at the Teatr Laboratorium and I – who mainly ran in the woods or in a studio laid with tree branches, a burning sawdust cone, and barrels of water – to encounter each other there. I would be circling in a ring, and she would be developing in her own way, and we were like twins, regardless of age, experience, or background in the work.

This flash, this sudden discovery during work on *Thanatos*, was confirmed elsewhere. Years later, in Frankfurt, when I was working with Michaela Marinescu – a very talented and intelligent Romanian actor who started her career during Ceauşescu's regime – I was a co-director focused on work with actors. I tried to help my colleagues (Marinescu and Ludger von M.) to find their creative potential. My role was strange and difficult to define. Essentially, I participated in the rehearsals and I tried to help them using Grotowski's principles. In each situation, firstly, I asked myself whether I wanted to help; secondly, whether I was able to help; and finally, how I could help. Michaela gave me my biggest compliment in this field: 'Irena, there are not many people in the world who know theatre as well as you do'. I was happy and embarrassed. To this day, I'm ignorant about the field of theatre studies.

Michaela and Ludger were impressed and I had the feeling that I was doing a 'good job'. For many years they remembered me. Today, we are no longer in touch, although we all live in Frankfurt am Main. But I withdrew from the theatre a long time ago.

Ludwik Flaszen, Administrative Director

I went to the office of the Director, by that time Ludwik Flaszen. I told him that I wanted to become a leader. Ludwik became very cross. He stood in front of his desk. Hearing my arguments, he lost his sense of humour. He started to pound the desk with his hand, giving himself an air of directorial seriousness. His hair became dishevelled. He couldn't imagine me as a leader, even though I was thirty years old and had ten years of experience.

I left the theatre, outraged, and from a corner shop I bought half a litre of vodka and walked, as usual, towards the Dom Aktora. I had to give myself an alcohol 'catharsis' on my own. Teresa visited me unexpectedly. I was already tipsy. At last, I could tell someone about my disappointment. Being slightly drunk, I acted out the whole incident with Ludwik in front of Teresa, including hitting the table with my fist, just as Ludwik had done. I must have been very convincing in this scene, as the broken bone in my wrist caused me trouble for a long time afterwards.

There was no remedy for the stubbornness of our senior colleagues. Ludwik and Rena Mirecka led the way. Jacek Zmysłowski was no longer there. Ryszard was travelling somewhere around the world. Grot also wasn't there (during Martial Law[43] he passed over the managerial duties to Ludwik).[44] Flaszen struggled with this role, sometimes

[43] Martial Law was established in Poland on 13 December 1981, suspended on 31 December 1982, and cancelled on 22 July 1983. Eds.

[44] In fact, Ludwik Flaszen became the director of the Teatr Laboratorium before this, on 17 October 1980. Eds.

he was completely lost. Thankfully, after Christmas and the New Year break, there was a meeting of the whole artistic group under Grotowski's supervision. It was January 1982: 'We need to cross the Polish border at any cost'.

Administration is an Art

During this memorable meeting with the artistic group, Grotowski actually said only one thing: that he would do anything it took for us to get across the Polish border as soon as possible. By then, Martial Law had been in place for over three weeks. And Grotowski really managed to do what he planned. At the beginning of April we were already on a train heading towards Vienna.[45] From there, we went to Italy, also by train. This was unusual in the history of our theatre because we normally travelled by plane. We belonged to that exceptional group of Poles who managed to cross the Polish border at the beginning of Martial Law.[46] [...]

I also remember another meeting – which took place around the time of the other one, perhaps even on the same afternoon – when Grotowski announced that real art lies in the organisation. I was surprised, or even disappointed. Again, I didn't understand our master. (How one can mistake art for administration?) Besides the fact that we, the artistic staff, were treated like sacred cows in the theatre, how can administration bear any comparison with art? This seemed some kind of new whim of our Boss. But of course, I accepted this in my own way, without going deeply into these new and revolutionary opinions. I was born during the 'heyday' of the socialist system (in the 1950s); I'm from a generation that was raised and grew up during socialism.

Now, after almost twenty years, in exactly the same post-New Year period, I have no doubts that Grotowski was right. Many times, since our parting in 1984, I have noticed the kind of wisdom that Grot passed on to us, even though this was still within the reality of socialism (the attitude of the so-called administration to the artistic group). Today, almost on my fiftieth birthday, I once again become convinced of the greatness of this statement that organisation is not only the basis of artistic creativity and art, but is the basis of life; and I say this with the responsibility of a person who has painfully experienced all this with an incurable illness.

TRANSLATED BY JUSTYNA DROBNIK-ROGERS

---

[45] Rycyk-Brill is probably mixing up the dates here, delaying the day of the actors' departure by a month. According to the chronology prepared by Zbigniew Osiński, the Teatr Laboratorium had already stayed in Pontedera from 5 to 18 March 1982, where they ran a series of training sessions at the Centro per la Sperimentazione e la Ricerca Teatrale under the supervision of Ludwik Flaszen. See Osiński, 'Występy gościnne...', pp. 674–75. Eds.

[46] This was possible due to the fact that the Polish authorities, for financial reasons, were afraid to break international agreements signed before 13 December 1981. Eds.

On Grotowski and the Secrets of the Voice

ZYGMUNT MOLIK TALKS TO TADEUSZ BURZYŃSKI

ZYGMUNT MOLIK (1930-2010) was for twenty-five years a principal actor at the Teatr Laboratorium. He performed in each of the company's theatre productions and was fundamental in developing the company's vocal training, following the initiation of this training by Grotowski. For Molik, the release of creative energy, and the search for the unity and connection between the body and the voice became the basis of the actor's process. His work sessions, which he led for many years in Poland and abroad, focused on releasing the blocked voice, body, and energy. His book with Giuliano Campo, *Zygmunt Molik's Voice and Body Work: The Legacy of Jerzy Grotowski*, with DVD-ROM, was published by Routledge in 2010.

This interview was originally published as 'O Grotowskim i tajemnicach głosu', *Gazeta Robotnicza – Magazyn Tygodniowy*, 121 (25 May 1990), 1 and 6-7, and was reprinted in the pamphlet *Zygmunt Molik*, ed. by Zbigniew Osiński (Wrocław: Grotowski Centre, 1992), pp. 9-11, as well as in Tadeusz Burzyński, *Mój Grotowski* (My Grotowski), ed. by Janusz Degler and Grzegorz Ziółkowski (Wrocław: Grotowski Centre, 2006), pp. 285-91.

Tadeusz Burzyński: It's not easy to arrange a conversation with you – you are constantly on the road. Most recently, you ended up in Wales. What were you doing there?

Zygmunt Molik: I participated in an international theatre symposium in Cardiff. It was a meeting of specialists in voice training.[1] People shared different practical experiences. It was a sort of confrontation of various techniques. I presented my work there and got to know the achievements of others. I was impressed with the Frenchman, Gilles Petit, who uses Indian techniques that enable some marvellous vibrations in the voice. But getting back to your reproaches – I'm not that unattainable. I try to organise my work in such a way that I spend half the year in Poland, where I also lead my own work. I've just finished a course with puppetry students at Wrocław's drama school...

Burzyński: Let's return to Cardiff though. How was your work received? The underlying question here is: are Grotowski's ideas still influential in the West?

Molik: I wouldn't like to sound immodest or boastful but the trend that I represent...

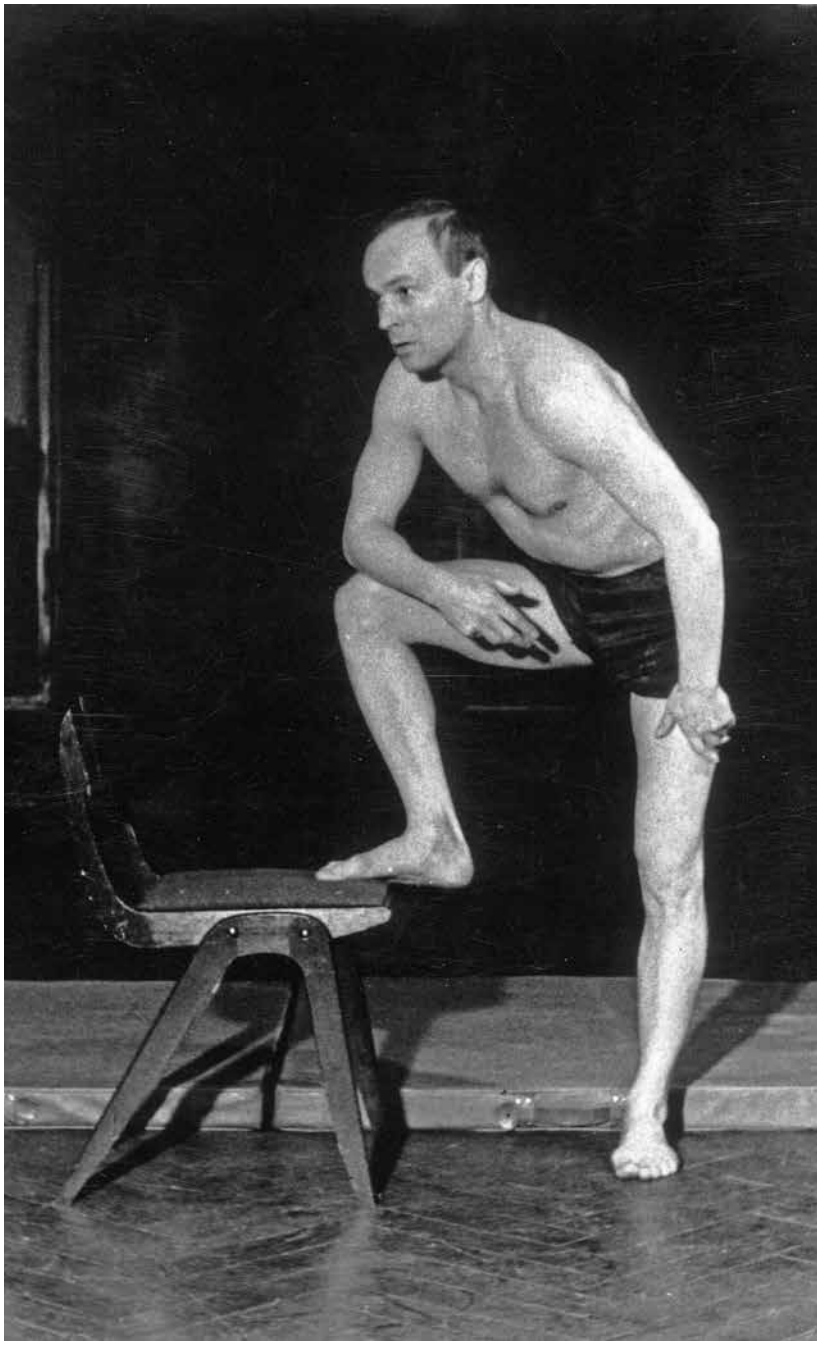
Burzyński: ...that you co-created...

Molik: ...that I represent – it dominated the symposium. It is a trend initiated by Grotowski that relies on drawing the voice from the body, on engaging the whole organism in action. Cardiff is not the only place where you can see how Grotowski's ideas are still alive, current, and inspiring around the world. Paradoxically, this is least visible in Poland.

Burzyński: Together with Rena Mirecka and the late Antoni Jahołkowski, you were with Grotowski from the beginning. You comprised the core of the actors in the early stages of the company, with you as the leading actor for several years. How did it begin for you?

Molik: I met Grotowski in 1955 during a students' field trip. We both studied acting at the time – he in Kraków and I in Warsaw. I took a great interest in his talk on the inner monologue. After my diploma, I worked in Łódź for a year, and for another year in the Teatr Ziemi Opolskiej (Opole Regional Theatre). To be honest, I wasn't that interested

[1] Molik is referring to 'Giving Voice', organised by the Centre for Performance Research in Cardiff, Wales. Molik led a workshop there from 19 to 25 April 1990. Eds.



Zygmunt Molik during a training session of the Teatr Laboratorium, mid-1960s.
Photograph: Ryszard Cieślak.

in acting then. I was having a bit of fun. Acting was something I had a good deal of distance from, as if it didn't concern me that much. I was waiting for something really important, something that would captivate me, become my life.

Burzyński: And then Grotowski arrived in Opole.

Molik: Exactly. He fished me out of the theatre…

Burzyński: …and offered you the chance to join a 'monastery'.

Molik: People said various things about us. It's true, the work was hard – sometimes simply murderous. But it wasn't agony. Any work in which you engage yourself completely can't be agony. It's – and I don't want to sound full of pathos here, but how can I put it otherwise? – it's fulfilling.

Burzyński: Did you work for the idea, for fame, for money?

Molik: I'd put it more simply: I worked for Grot. This was crucial. Of course I had a certain awareness of the purpose of our research but, in truth, Grotowski was always ahead of us. For my part, to a great extent, it was always trust in him.

Burzyński: Wasn't it an unsettling experience for you when, at various stages, your position as the lead actor was taken first by [Zbigniew] Cynkutis, then by [Ryszard] Cieślak, and then in the post-theatrical phase when Jacek Zmysłowski started to become a key figure?

Molik: Not at all. Absolutely not. I simply didn't differentiate between my own interests and those of the group. And I understood that for different tasks and phases of Grotowski's research, each individual could contribute more or less at different times. Sometimes I had serious problems keeping up with Grotowski. During the first stage of the paratheatrical research that was led in Brzezinka, I couldn't find myself for many months. So for a year I served as a driver and a supplier instead.[2] I needed that much time to break through my actor's 'crust' and to retrieve an elementary, pure, human sensitivity that was crucial in this work. But it was worth it. The work in Brzezinka gradually revealed completely new, previously obscure, areas of reality for me.

Burzyński: When I mentioned the 'monastery', I was thinking of the various, significant sacrifices: real poverty, lack of time for your families…

Molik: As you know, I have a normal family – two children, a grandchild. Jahołkowski was

[2] Molik drove work participants by van to and from the premises owned by the Teatr Laboratorium near the village of Brzezinka, and also made supply runs to obtain food and other items. Trans.

similarly fortunate. But it wasn't easy for our wives for the first ten years. Their lives were a bit like those of seamen's wives. One difference was that at least sailors bring in a fair amount of money, whereas our families literally lived from hand-to-mouth for a long time. Often we didn't have enough to secure the most basic items. There were long periods when we didn't eat butter, not to mention ham or other such goods. But, after all, this doesn't define the quality of your life. In any case, my wife, Teresa, understood this well.

Burzyński: There had been so much hard work and sacrifice, and when you became famous and started to earn decent money – at least by Polish standards – Grotowski suddenly left you. He undertook Theatre of Sources with an entirely new, international group, and then moved away even further into his mysterious solitude. Didn't you feel betrayed somehow?

Molik: Many people have asked about this, without understanding what is obvious for me. In a certain phase of his research, Grotowski had to associate with new people who had different experiences and different capacities. It wasn't that he abandoned us. He'd prepared us for it and supported us on our new paths, which were increasingly independent and individual. After all, we did *Tree of People* as if we were already beyond Grotowski. You could say it was then that we reached our full maturity. From then on, everyone set out on their own paths.

Burzyński: Your path is a particular kind of pedagogy, is that correct? Who is Zygmunt Molik, Grotowski's former actor, today?

Molik: I work in Poland and abroad with various groups – mostly actors, although not exclusively – conducting a sort of training. In doing so, I draw on both the experiences of the theatrical phase and the later stages of our work in Brzezinka. But it isn't pedagogy in the strict sense of the word. In this work, I play the role of a kind of guide in the domain of body and voice – perhaps a strange kind of 'obstetrician'. I assist in the birth of the Voice. I mean the Voice that isn't just a sound consisting of different tones and vibrations, but a carrier of energy and of quality – that is, a manifestation of a particular individual's personality. The sources of this Voice are often deeply hidden, blocked. And these are very creative sources: vital, important in the life of each human – not only actors – although in the case of actors they are crucial and useful in the profession.

Burzyński: And [Jerzy] Radziwiłowicz says that you are… cruel.[3]

Molik: He did a workshop with me in the 1970s. Quite recently he told me he'd never experienced a drill like that in his life. But he worked brilliantly. He's an outstanding actor who really searched – not only during that workshop – who searched to move beyond accepted standards and conventional limits. You can see the results in his performances.

Burzyński: I also went through the Teatr Laboratorium 'drill' several times – I even think of a workshop in Brzezinka as one of the most important experiences of my life. Thank you for this conversation.

TRANSLATED BY DUNCAN JAMIESON AND ADELA KARSZNIA

[3] Jerzy Radziwiłowicz (b. 1950) is a well-recognised Polish actor, best known for his roles in the films of Andrzej Wajda. Trans.

It Is About Something Much More Important

RENA MIRECKA TALKS TO TADEUSZ KORNAŚ

RENA MIRECKA was a leading actor at the Teatr Laboratorium, and was one of the founding members of the company who remained until its self-dissolution in 1984. She was the principal work leader of the *plastiques* exercises, which she co-developed with Jerzy Grotowski and which formed a core part of the Laboratorium training. She performed the main female roles in all the performances created during the Theatre of Productions phase, including in *Akropolis*, as Fenix in *The Constant Prince*, and as Mary Magdalene in *Apocalypsis cum Figuris*. For many years, she has been conducting her own paratheatrical research project *The Way*.

This interview was originally published as 'Chodzi o coś o wiele ważniejszego', *Didaskalia*, 43-44 (2001), 55-59. It was reprinted in *Podróż. Rena Mirecka – aktorka Teatru Laboratorium* (Journey: Rena Mirecka, Laboratory Theatre Actress), ed. by Zbigniew Jędrychowski, Zbigniew Osiński, and Grzegorz Ziółkowski (Wrocław: Grotowski Centre, 2005), pp. 77–85, and in: Tadeusz Kornaś, *Aniołom i światu widowisko. Szkice i rozmowy o teatrze* (A Spectacle Unto the World, and to Angels: Essays and Conversations on Theatre) (Kraków: Wydawnictwo Homini, 2009), pp. 115-25.

Tadeusz Kornaś: You worked at the Teatr Laboratorium from the very beginning until its dissolution. Did you suspect from the start where this path would lead?

Rena Mirecka: It was a life-test for me. It was an attempt to encounter and travel within myself. This journey had specific stages. For twenty-five years, I worked in a team with my very, very close Colleagues. We called Grotowski 'Boss' and what we meant by that was somebody who took us over the bridge that led towards the unknown. At the beginning of the theatrical period, I had no idea what I would be doing for so many years. The rhythm of work was incredibly intense. In those days, like many other women, I expected that something would happen with my private life. And it probably would have happened if I hadn't met Grotowski. When I started to see something important in this flashing, open space on the path of the Great Trees, I began to feel and realise that I was not destined to be able to combine my private life with my creative one. My love for what we were doing was profound. And, I suppose, there was the love of myself, which is absolutely essential in life. At a certain stage of your life such love has nothing to do with egotism.

Kornaś: In the 1970s, Grotowski decided that there would be no more performances at the Laboratorium. But all of you were actors. Was this turning point a blow for you? Did you understand the decision back then?

Mirecka: Well, the '70s... The wonderful chapters about the Teatr Laboratorium were written throughout twenty-five years. Those years also include the paratheatrical period.

At that point, Grotowski asked everyone, myself included, whether I would like – and feel able to – inscribe myself into this new way, and whether I would go with him to Brzezinka and so on. The question was formulated in such a way that I answered 'No'. At the beginning of the paratheatrical period, I helped other Colleagues who had gone to Brzezinka, but my participation in what was being created only began later.[1]

[1] In November 1972, at the invitation of Kazimierz

Rena Mirecka in *Apocalypsis cum Figuris* in 1979.
Photograph: Maurizio Buscarino.

Kornaś: This question was not without reason. Is what you are doing now a continuation of that paratheatrical period? The International Centre of Work Prema Sãyi that you run doesn't create performances.

Mirecka: Now I feel like a bird. The cage has been opened. I shouldn't take the credit for everything that I am doing. I want to emphasise this. I found some strength within myself thanks to this wonderful work with Grotowski and all the efforts and incredible hardship. He was mercilessly demanding. And that was right. Thanks to this, we climbed from one rung to another. The creation of each performance used to start from a different level; you had to forget completely what had been done before. It wasn't simple, but it was genius, as we got to know ourselves better and deeper, step by step. We were getting to know our flaws but also our strengths. Only those who had creative potential stayed with Grotowski to the end. I suffered sometimes because the men were inspired in a different way, due to the fact that Grotowski was a man.

What I'm doing at the moment is no different from what a sculptor does with various materials: drilling, discarding, and shaping. I continually go back to the source that is teeming with life in me, even though our Theatre, as such, has ended. Early on, perhaps subconsciously, Grotowski used to take us to meetings with other actors; we used to lead workshops in various parts of the world and in different cultures. And this embryo of encounters remained between those people and me, even after the theatre ceased to exist. Well, has it ever ceased to exist? It only closed certain chapters. It still exists in the people who experienced this with us.

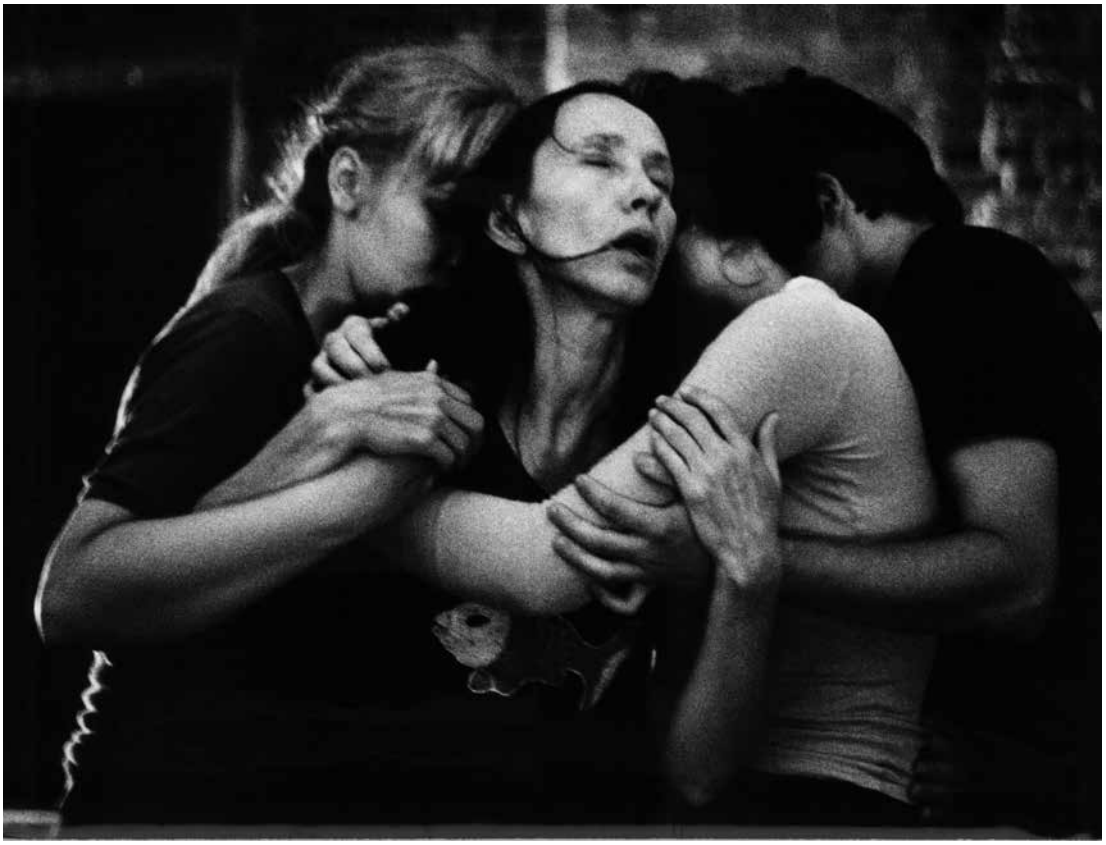
So, it was like a bird inside of me that was looking around, stepping on the ground but looking up high. When the Teatr Laboratorium ended and all my Colleagues went their own ways, I didn't want to be alone. I said to Ewa Benesz, 'Let's do something together'.[2] I also asked Mariusz Socha. We met in Brzezinka where Grotowski started paratheatre.

Kornaś: Did you have any precise plans even then?

Mirecka: It was 1982. We started getting ready to leave. Firstly, I went with Ewa to Germany and then with Mariusz to Belgium. But that isn't important. The important thing is that we started in this forest in Brzezinka and that we lit a big fire in the hearth there every day. In this room, we prepared ourselves for what lay ahead. We had to create structures for our activities. And then, later on, our wonderful encounters started with the participants in the

Braun, Mirecka and Zbigniew Cynkutis began working in the Teatr im. Juliusza Osterwy (Juliusz Osterwa Theatre) in Lublin on an event called *Jałowa* (Wasted) based on Federico García Lorca's *Yerma*. The event, which premiered on 16 February 1973, was directed by Cynkutis with Mirecka among the cast of four actors. They continued their collaboration with the theatre in January and February 1974 on an event called *Arka* (The Ark). See Zbigniew Osiński, 'Występy gościnne Teatru Laboratorium, 1959-1984. Kronika działalności 1978-1984' (Touring performances of the Teatr Laboratorium, 1959-1984. A Chronicle of Activities 1978-1984), *Pamiętnik Teatralny*, 1-4 (2000), 641, 644. See also the interview with Teo Spychalski elsewhere in this volume, pp. 150-60 (p. 153-55). Eds.

[2] After Polish philology studies in Lublin and theatre experiences in Gorzów Wielkopolski, Ewa Benesz worked as an apprentice in the Teatr Laboratorium from 1966 to 1968 and performed in *Ewangelie* (see the interview with Teo Spychalski in this volume, p. 151-52). From 1968 to 1970 she collaborated with Warsaw's Teatr Żydowski (Jewish Theatre), performing title roles in *The Dybbuk* and *The Golem*. She attended directing courses at the PWST (State Higher Theatre School) where she met Małgorzata Dziewulska, Ryszard Peryt, and Piotr Cieślak. Together, in September 1970, they founded the Puławskie Studio Teatralne (Puławy Theatre Studio) sponsored by the Zakłady Azotowe (chemical factory) in Puławy. The studio's work – inspired by the Teatr Laboratorium's approach – was banned by the Służba Bezpieczeństwa (the secret police) due to their contacts with the opposition. After passing an external acting examination in 1971, from 1972 Benesz started to recite Adam Mickiewicz's *Pan Tadeusz*, the classical Romantic Polish epic, in various Polish cities. In 1976, she began to wander around Poland to recite Romantic poetry in Polish villages. In 1980 to 1981, when she worked in the Teatr Laboratorium again, she wandered and recited Mickiewicz's poetry in the Wielkopolska region. See Tadeusz Kornaś, 'Śpiew aojda' (A Bard's Singing), *Didaskalia*, 29 (1999), 59-61. Eds.



Rena Mirecka with the participants of a workshop at Brzezinka in the early 1980s.
Photograph: Maciej Stawiński.

workshops, with people similar to us. In Brzezinka there was a white tablecloth on the ground, there was the Book [The Bible], water, and fire. And we got going there. We started to be close to water. Each in their own way. The fire was extremely hot. The gate, these great doors into the mill were open and suddenly it began to pour down with rain. If I remember well, there are two big pillars in this room.[3] We squatted by them and started to sing: 'A my tu dla i ku, aż pozwolisz nam w łodzi siąść bez trwóg. Światło opromieni naszą nową podróż' (Here we are for and towards, until you allow us to sit in the boat without any fear. The light will illuminate our new journey). We created this first song there together.

One day, about noon, Ewa was sitting on a bench in front of the wooden house that had been built by Czesiu [Czesław] Szarek (which had been a kitchen during the paratheatrical phase).[4] Mariusz was carrying some wood. I went outside the mill and stood in this great tall grass. And then… A butterfly alighted nowhere other than right here, between my eyebrows. For me it was… I didn't know what was happening. My voice changed. Energy was speaking through me. And while this Blue Butterfly was there, I started to talk about this triptych, about the three phases of our work together. And then, suddenly, the butterfly flew away.

And I said to Ewa and Mariusz: 'Look, what a wonderful story for a film'. And you know, when the Teatr Laboratorium no longer existed, Grotowski used to ask me, just like you asked me today: 'Do you miss the theatre?' I used to say no, but I was dreaming about at least one piece of work in film. And the years passed. So, I said to Ewa and Mariusz, we have wonderful material for a film. After years of searching, I realised that what I had thought was for a film had started shaping itself in the creative efforts of Ewa, Mariusz, and myself, in what later became paratheatre projects. Our first project was called *Be here, now – TOWARDS*. The second

[3] In fact, there are three. Eds.

[4] Czesław Szarek (1937-2011) worked for many years as a technical assistant in the Teatr Laboratorium. Eds.

one was *THE WAY to the CENTRE*. And the third one – *Now is the flight*. And now it is *THE WAY*.[5]

The second part of my triptych vision was a journey I took with a man on a raft down a wonderful bright river. I was sitting on one side of the raft and he was on the other. There are no words to describe the tranquillity in the grass, in the rustling of the leaves, and the water which used our raft as a musical instrument. In this tranquillity, I heard a voice saying to me: 'In every person, you will see Him'. I perceive visions audibly. And then, I also read, from right to left, an inscription: 'Area Rag'. I understood that it was India, as classical Indian songs are called Ragas. The third part of the triptych was called *The Desert*.

Kornaś: Did these visions from Brzezinka have any concrete effect on your work with people?

Mirecka: We built the first wonderful ship, not just a raft, on the meadow near Casa Cenci, which is a laboratory near Rome that belongs to Franco Lorenzoni.[6] Earlier, Grotowski had been working in this farmhouse on the Theatre of Sources project.[7] We went there in 1984. There were many participants. We spread out on a meadow an endless roll of cotton sheet, on which we were all painting. And this cotton became the deck of our ship, which was called Gara Rea and came from my vision of Area Rag, India. So the raft became a ship. We really experienced that journey by ship, day and night, all the time. Our activities would stop in a natural way when we collapsed with exhaustion, when we had to eat or lie down on the ground under the sky in order to have some rest.

Among the others, there was a Jaron Goldstein who was building this ship with us. At that time he had a theatre in Stuttgart. He came from Israel. After a few days of work, he asked me: 'Rena, would you like to run my dream project?'. 'What is your dream?', I asked. 'I would like to give, from Germany where I have lived for so many years, something wonderful to the families of those who lost their lives in the concentration camps'. 'OK, we'll do this together; start getting it ready', I replied. Soon afterwards, he sent me photos from the Negev desert in Israel. A small town was built there, with many houses for artists. Many of them were empty. Goldstein said that we would live in one of those houses during the work and that occasionally we would go out into the desert. I said no and told him that all our activities, from start to finish, should be conducted out in the desert. And so we lived there for seventeen days. All our ventures were inspired by our desire for knowledge. Why is there fog? Why does the sun rise so early now...? We had to get close to water, air, fire, and the earth in order to understand this. Every day we travelled through the desert, one after the other... At dawn we could see from a distance some fawns and deer, standing at the foot of the sandy mountain, looking towards the gold and red sky. The beloved Eastern Sun was rising on the horizon.

Kornaś: People from various parts of the world come to your Prema Sãyi centre. What does the work there look like?

Mirecka: You've jumped to 1993. Ewa was back in Poland then. I told her: 'Ewa, come and work here, we have a house.' At the beginning Ewa came to this house, and day by day there were also Italians: Pier Pietro Brunelli, Franco Zanotti, and Vincenzo Atzeni; Alfred Buccholz from Germany, the Spaniard Maribel Gonzalez Muñoz, as well as Matteo Forti, Fiorida de Marchi, Nicola Dentamaro, Antonio Gazzotti, Loris Tirelli, Paola Torricelli, Julian Knab – all wonderful people. They started working with us in order to create a studio in this house which we'd rented from shepherds. There were many rooms,

---

[5] These titles are given in English first then Polish in the original. Trans.

[6] For further information, see <http://www.cenci-casalab.it/cenci>. Eds.

[7] Grotowski and his Theatre of Sources assistants worked in Casa Cenci from March to June 1982, during the course of Grotowski's lectures in Rome at La Sapienza University. For details of the unauthorised manuscript of this lecture series see 'Introduction: Voices from Within' in this volume, pp. 8-15 (p. 11, n. 10). Eds.

but not one big one. 'Our' house [Prema Sãyi] in Sardinia is on a hill. Its name comes from a flower. One day somebody brought a white lily into the work for me, but it wasn't the kind of lily that I remembered from my childhood. The Italians said that it was a *casa blanca*. So I said to Ewa, 'the house will be called Casa Blanca'.

Those friends, who built the studio with Ewa and me, had started out as our students. With us they practised the rites of fire, of water, the rites of the ways to the Sun – our quests. They became closely connected to us. They paid to accompany us everywhere we went. We couldn't do much for them as we've always struggled financially.

We work with music a lot. Music is one of the most profound arts, which is able to penetrate the human soul. We create this music live. Ewa learnt to play while wandering with a zither and a drum around Polish fields. I taught myself to play various instruments too. The three of us created the scores for our activities, and then we did them with the people I have mentioned. These scores were written through ongoing notes made by Ewa, Mariusz and, me, and also by those who joined us. We also have photo and video documentation. Most of those who turn up come here from their often simple duties; they are at various stages of their lives. Some of them begin their own personal search later on. For instance, Franco Zanotti currently leads the Campi Scuola (School Camps) at the Laboratorio Casa Cenci. He works with a group of people and runs seminars. In any case, the majority of people who have worked with us develop this thread to recognise the labyrinth of their own self. And now they are creating things in various places around the world, but from time to time they come and get involved in what Ewa is doing and what happens with me in the work. We have become connected and no one is able to disconnect us. Pietro Brunelli has been taking part in the paratheatre activity for years now and he writes about our searches.[8]

Kornaś: Can anyone come and participate in the workshops that you run at Prema Sãyi in Sardinia?

Mirecka: At the start of each year, we write programmes of where and when the meetings will take place. Everyone who applies can try to take part in them.

When there were three and then two of us, we ran seven-day programmes. Now, the cycles last about five or three days. It depends upon where the workshop is taking place and what the conditions are. At the Grotowski Centre I tend to work for five days.[9] My level of fitness is also changing. Finding travel difficult for many years was one of the reasons why Casa Blanca – our centre – was set up. [This is] at the moment. I believe that one day I'll meet a good organiser who will understand well their role both in Poland and in the world, and who will work as a manager for the benefit of themselves and others. I'm also looking for a sponsor for my School of Artistic Education.

Kornaś: Do you create certain structures during the workshops?

Mirecka: There are usually fifteen people who take part in each workshop, although we've also worked with thirty-two participants in the past. But now, when I work on my own, there are usually fifteen or a maximum of twenty-one people. The structure of the meeting is always prepared in advance and carried out each time, but depending on who is participating and how they react, there is scope for improvisation within the given structure. For example, everyone takes part in the dance, which starts in a certain manner. If, within this dance, there is the possibility for someone to react in their own individual way, then I respond to that with my own self. But there are also dances that are rooted in tradition and these

[8] Pier Pietro Brunelli, a Bologna University psychology graduate, is a specialist in social communication. He has collaborated with Mirecka since 1987 and has written a book about his experiences: *Saggio nel dramma per Rena Mirecka* (An Essay on Drama according to Rena Mirecka) (Milan: Associazione Culturale Albedo, 1994).Eds.

[9] Renamed the Grotowski Institute from the end of December 2006. Trans.

cannot be changed. The person who comes into them should try to follow the same step and the same rhythm. Only in this way can our meeting in Unity take place.

Kornaś: Do actors take part in your workshops?

Mirecka: When Grotowski left, I felt that I would like to pass on to actors everything that came from us and that was alive in me, but I didn't know how to invite them. They are lazy and they are not keen to learn anything new. They agree to work with very uncreative directors. This is very sad. There are not many actors who resist being pigeonholed by a single form. You must not repeat the same things mechanically. The need to approach *catharsis* and cleanse yourself as an actor is crucial in order to be human above all else. This is essential in order to become an artist-actor, not a workhorse. It is very important for me to be able to help actors, especially the young ones. This is why I'm going to open a school under my patronage, which will exist in Poland and abroad.

Yes, I invite actors mainly. In some countries they come, but there aren't many of them. The majority of people who come to the workshops are from various different professions. Work with actors is drudgery, because they are 'masked', defensive, and untruthful. It is a very difficult task to bring out a spark of human, organic presence. They are taught to act and I was taught by Grotowski not to act. Well, I'd been taught how to act at drama school, and later I had to get rid of this.

Kornaś: Earlier you mentioned the rites of fire and water. Are these structures repeatable?

Mirecka: These structures have lasted fifteen years. They appeared because a creature – they say *ancestrale* in Italian, which means an ancestor – initiated me. The butterfly is a symbol of transformation but it contains the spirit of an ancestor. The life of our rituals lasted for many years, although they changed slightly and new steps grew up alongside those steps that had already been researched and experienced with people. They endured, because the metaphysical wanted it to go this Way. We were well protected during this work with people. For instance, we'd start at dawn in order to be able to go and stop on a hill and look towards this special direction – towards the sunrise. When people joined us for the first time, it wasn't very easy. The difference between our experience and those who were new was evident. We tried to tell them: 'Don't be afraid, for in the true reality we're all the Unity.' We also tried to do this through our songs, movements, and through various other proposals. We inspired the participants. Usually, we started our workshops at dawn, at five in the morning. We used to say to the participants: 'We will lead this work, but you should know that you're supposed to start preparing your own proposal right from our very first meeting. You will create the figures of the four seasons. You can choose: winter, summer, autumn, or spring. This needs to be visible in the form you choose and you will work with it, you will speak, dance, or sing, but it needs to come out from the source of yourself'. The participants immediately received tasks and we worked in seven-day cycles without a break. It is not so unusual to participate – but it is extraordinary to create from within yourself, from your personal experience, your pain, suffering, and happiness. You need to expose and make a sacrifice of yourself. Only then is the spectator or witness of our action able to become a drop of the same water.

Kornaś: You've also mentioned music that penetrates the human soul and that you continually sing. Where do the musical strands come from? Are they rooted in tradition? Are they improvised?

Mirecka: Our first singing was – and continues to be – based on mantras that we learned in India. Sometimes we sing them with drums. What penetrates through these structures is this *power song*. *Power*, or strength.[10] When a person creates their own song, there is magic in it. We worked without watches when singing during our rehearsals. Time and space ceased to exist in our work.

[10] 'Power song' and 'power' are in English in the original. Trans.

Being here and now was only marked by the sun, which rose and then went to bed at sunset. What I felt and realised then was 'worship'. I've worked a lot. I remember one day in 1993 when Mariusz had left and our closest students had gone away. Only Ewa and I had stayed. I haven't always been so brave in going towards everything that is alive in Great Nature. We were surrounded by the power of the Sardinian mountains and the cleanest air. The sun was setting and I felt that I was losing my energy and that I had to defend myself. I entered the studio and I opened the huge green doors with three great shutters. My plea was the ultimate – it's difficult to describe it, but I addressed Vigneswara, from Indian culture.[11] I simply begged him for help with the singing and dancing. It was May 1993.

In August, Ewa and I were again in Casa Cenci and we were running the project *THE WAY to the CENTRE*.[12] Suddenly we received a phone call that somebody wanted to see us. We had to complete two other projects first, so I asked Ewa to arrange a meeting for 28 August. That day, I saw an unusual woman and a line of people behind her. Ewa and I were barefoot, dressed in white. We went to greet them and sat under the Ornella (blooming ash) tree in the meadow next to Casa Cenci. We sat at a long table and our conversation went on and on. I became tired and said to this woman, who was slightly older than me: 'Maybe you know something about this, but I have the impression that this tree is ill'. I got up in order to take a break from these people. And next to this tree, the woman said to me: 'I know everything about you'. 'What can you know about me?' I thought. And she asked, 'Do you want to work with me?' I replied, 'Yes, but where?' 'Here and now'. In a moment we were both in the studio. And after a while, Ewa and the others joined us. I'll put it succinctly: she was a shaman, the Turtle Rattle Woman, who had arrived.[13] When, in May, at the Prema Sãyi centre, I was calling and experiencing my ritual, she was in America, in Florida, and she had heard that somebody in Italy was calling…

It is nineteen years since the start of our work in Brzezinka. One plus nine makes ten, and this means that an unusual cycle of pilgrimage and self-discovery has come to a close. And now I'm here, in Wrocław. I run workshops and every time these wonderful people, here and from around the world, ask me many questions, which I cannot answer in a rational way.

Kornaś: Everything began with theatre at the Teatr Laboratorium, but what you're talking about now is something beyond art. Can art lead to getting to know the world?

Mirecka: This is not beyond art. Paratheatre is the highest form of art, and stems from the beginning of the theatre, from Greek theatre. We've all learned about where the initial spirit of the theatre came from. This is where you need to look and understand that human talent is equipped with cosmic music, movement, and sound. And the form that this searching takes depends on the creators – whether it's going to be classical theatre, a theatre laboratory, or paratheatre.

Kornaś: Is calling God also an art?

Mirecka: I cannot answer this, because what is Unity simply Exists.

Kornaś: But you can often appeal to God without being united, and this kind of calling usually has a specific structure. You said earlier that you were calling and somebody on the other side of the ocean was able to hear you. That is why I'm asking about art and its borders.

Mirecka: Questions sometimes need to remain unanswered. Sometimes words are unnecessary. The blue marks on our planet exist only here and there and these marks are people who pray and who are visible from astral journeys. Supposedly, our planet is in darkness. I think it is essential for a human being to start calling, because we all undergo evolution. If

[11] Also known as Lord Ganesha, the remover of obstacles. Trans.

[12] The title is in English in the original. Trans.

[13] In English in the original. Trans.

Rena Mirecka and the participants of a workshop *THE WAY*, Wrocław, 2003. Photograph: Maciej Stawiński.

more societies in various cultures, also in Polish culture, realise what life and the secret of our life is and where its meaning lies, perhaps your grandchildren will be able to experience a time when only one language will exist, and this will be the language of your heart. Borders will disappear and Universal Love will rule. If we honestly, and with the whole self, ask for something to happen, it will happen. We need to be careful and not to lie though, because evil can emerge. As you've said, if you ask or call for something, you need to be boundlessly human and truthful, as in a child's magic. And then it will happen.

Kornaś: You said earlier that your work with Mariusz Socha and Ewa Benesz was centred on worshipping. Maybe these questions are already too personal…

Mirecka: Mr Tadeusz, at this point, this needs to stop being personal. For eighteen years, I've been trying to find the language to camouflage the Truth that I feel and that guides me. I think this is the time to speak up about what I feel, think, and how I understand it.

Kornaś: You said 'worship'. I associate this word with two things: you can worship in various ways and you can worship various things. If the work in Prema Sãyi is centred on worshipping…

Mirecka: Not only. There is apotheosis and profanation in art. Acting wholly in the so-called process of the 'total actor', you open up by the force of events to some kind of happiness and some great suffering. You try to get rid of this second thing or make this thing go away. But this costs you. You don't get awareness for free. This isn't a book or university where lectures are being repeated in a deadly way. This is a creative process here and now, which takes place in a different dimension of your consciousness, where everything that has been given to a person at birth and that comes from a former incarnation flows from the subconscious. A person cannot create anything more than what has been given to them. The highest meaning of being here on earth is contained in a message: keep discovering who you are and love yourself because you were incarnated with love. You received this love at the moment of conception. Happy are those children who have been conceived from the love between their mother and father. Now they ought to love in this life. You contain in yourself the same thing that connects a tree, a mountain, and a stilt. These are symbols that connect a human being with the earth and the sky. They connect us with *Prana* – the cosmic and vital energy, which we breathe. We can live for a few days if we do not eat or drink, but if our breathing is blocked, there is no cosmic energy, and the body already starts to die. What I want to say is that everything you need to search and get to know is in yourself and then we will be supported by what is similar to us in others and will be led by those who manifest themselves in Great Nature. There is no point searching in this catastrophic world of great illusion and ignorance. Power and wisdom come from one's lived-through experience. Who are you? Who am I? This happens with the highest Truth and solitude. It is not this kind of human solitude that we all think about. You can never be lonely. At some point, a person who is searching knows that there is no point in continuing to search. Searching is an act that happens very much worldwide.

Kornaś: You said that each person can only reach what fate has programmed within

them. Why do you work then? Is it to help others in spite of this?

Mirecka: First of all, to help myself and to be able to recognise my fate individually. You cannot help others if you are not able to deal with your own difficulties, troubles, your incapacity and often stupidity. Considering what has happened since 1959 and the fact that we were giving what we created with Grotowski and what I created later on my own, this continuous act of giving makes me very tired right now. This is a complicated moment accompanied by a deep passivity, quietude, and belief. In such a moment of trust and disarmament, you can reach almost anything. Then, your duty is to share it with others. Although I don't really feel that it is my duty – this is The Purest Love.

Kornaś: Have you seen Grotowski's *Action* [created at the Workcenter in Pontedera], and has Grotowski seen your work?

Mirecka: I saw *Action* when Grotowski presented it in Wrocław a few years ago [in 1997]. Grotowski found out about our work through many of our participants, who were in touch with him. He knew what we were doing and watched our documentation – he found it surprising that we were so different from the people he had known before.

Kornaś: Has the work you do in Sardinia similar aims to those of Grotowski's work in Pontedera?

Mirecka: If your question refers to the point, the aim, the direction of *THE WAY*, the answer is yes. Only the form is completely different. You need to leave your own trace and pass a sign on to those who are present.

Kornaś: You said that in your work it's currently the period of *THE WAY*.

Mirecka: *THE WAY* – the Art of Unity – is happening. I need to go back to a meeting with the shaman, the Turtle Rattle Woman. She passed on the world of ancient knowledge that takes us closer to the experience of the presence of Mother Nature's great creative energy and the energy of the world directions. We are all connected in One. This woman made the Raft from my Blue Butterfly vision become the Sacred Canoe in the course of the creation.[14]

I don't look too far into the future. Be and happen. I am an open channel for passing energy. I serve and people join me for the Journey. For those few days of an encounter, a special Community is born. This is how my dream comes true. Not having any offspring, I bring into being this short time of brotherhood. People feel this. That's why in struggling with the matter of the body, not only the physical body, you need to allow for movement, sounds, the rhythm, and the vital power of the living Ubiquitous Energy, which has been called out, to lead the Sacred Canoe. This is how I envisage *THE WAY*.

I am now breaking away from many years of haven in the Desert and embarking on the next expedition. I believe – I strongly believe and I know – that there is no other way but to understand the biggest secret of secrets. There is the One and Only Almightiness and every one of us is a part of this Cosmic Almightiness. Let it happen. It is not about me, but about something much more important.

I would like to dedicate this conversation to my Dear Sister, Władysława Radołowicz

Rena Mirecka

TRANSLATED BY JUSTYNA DROBNIK-ROGERS

[14] 'Sacred Canoe' is in English in the original. Trans.

A Recollection

PRZEMYSŁAW WASILKOWSKI

PRZEMYSŁAW WASILKOWSKI collaborated with Grotowski at the Workcenter of Jerzy Grotowski and Thomas Richards in Pontedera, Italy, from 1994-1999. He initially trained as an actor at the State Higher School for Film, Television, and Theatre in Łódź – where he is now studying for his PhD – and then worked professionally in the theatre in Warsaw. Since May 1999, he has run a series of meetings/workshops called *The Source of Movement*, while continuing to develop his own acting work, including the solo piece *Lament Doctoris Fausti* (Dr Faustus's Lament) and numerous roles in the professional theatre. He teaches internationally, as well as at the Policealne Studium Aktorskie (Graduate Actors' Studio) of the Teatr im. Stefana Jaracza (Stefan Jaracz Theatre) in Olsztyn.

This text was revised and updated by the author in 2010 based on the original Polish version, which was published as 'Wspomnienie', *Pamiętnik Teatralny*, 1-2 (2001), 254-56.

Ten years after I left the Workcenter, my recollections about the time I spent in Pontedera are inevitably marked by a lack of precision, for some details escape me.[1] The past takes the form of a legend. Hence this record is only fragmentary, limited, incomplete.

My first contact with Jerzy Grotowski's theatre took place when I was a theology student in Wrocław. I watched a video recording of *The Constant Prince*[2] with some friends at the Grotowski Centre.[3] At that time, I wasn't interested in theatre; I got into it by chance. My initial reactions to what I'd seen weren't positive. Later I realised that this was a kind of defence mechanism against something that had moved me deeply and created an early, strong impulse towards the theatre, towards acting. After that, I knew that I wanted to go on stage and experience what I had sensed while watching Ryszard Cieślak. Consequently, I began a long fight to realise my dreams that lasted for three years and ended up happily. I became a student at the Państwowa Wyższa Szkoła Filmowa, Telewizyjna i Teatralna (State Higher Film, Television, and Theatre School) in Łódź. My great adventure with theatre had begun. The beginning was filled with magic and optimism. I didn't yet know about the difficult struggles of the actor's profession.

---

[1] Wasilkowski joined the Workcenter of Jerzy Grotowski in January 1994 and left in May 1999. Grotowski changed the name to the 'Workcenter of Jerzy Grotowski and Thomas Richards' in 1996. For more on the Workcenter's practice see Thomas Richards, *At Work with Grotowski on Physical Actions* (London and New York: Routledge, 1995), and *Heart of Practice: Within the Workcenter of Jerzy Grotowski and Thomas Richards* (London and New York: Routledge, 2008). Eds.

[2] A digitally restored DVD of *The Constant Prince* with subtitles in several languages was subsequently produced and edited by Ferruccio Marotti (Rome: Centro Teatro Ateneo, 2005). Eds.

[3] The abbreviated name of the Ośrodek Badań Twórczości Jerzego Grotowskiego i Poszukiwań Teatralno-Kulturowych (Centre for Studies of Jerzy Grotowski's Work and for Cultural and Theatrical Research), presently the Instytut im. Jerzego Grotowskiego (Grotowski Institute). Trans.

What had only been a hunch now 'embodied itself', mainly thanks to two wonderful teachers, Zofia Petri and Michał Pawlicki, who oversaw my initiation into acting and whose spirit is still present in my theatre work.[4] Thanks to them, I started to believe that theatre could be a magical place, a place of transformation and transgression. I had my first flashes of insight, my first impressions of that exceptional state of 'grace' when the actor loses themselves in their role without losing consciousness of what is happening to them. It often lasted only a few seconds, but it happened, and I dare say it did so for the majority of students who took their first steps onstage under the supervision of these exceptional pedagogues. I couldn't find this later with different teachers, and this was a source of frustration.

I began to search alone for what I was looking for. I wondered about what made my subsequent attempts at stage creations so technical, so devoid of life and, as a result, unconvincing to the spectators. Another semester of work followed and we started on scenes from Shakespeare. Instinctively, I chose a scene from *Richard III*. I began working intensively on the physicality of my character, who had been impaired by illness, and I suddenly discovered that elusive 'something' was returning. I realised then that the secret lay in my body and that my body could be a tool that leads to the inner life of the character. The process began with the body, and the more analytical mind followed. This discovery reminded me once more of Grotowski's and Cieślak's creation, which by then I had forgotten about. There were people who had researched this phenomenon in the actor's work systematically and with rigour. I decided to try to get closer to this, hoping that my intuitions weren't only illusions.

Przemysław Wasilkowski in *Dr Faustus's Lament* (1999).
Photograph: Jan Sobolewski; courtesy of the author.

I contacted the Grotowski Centre in Wrocław and persuaded our Dean to invite Professor Zbigniew Osiński to our drama school with a lecture and film presentation about the Teatr Laboratorium.[5] I watched *The Constant Prince* and once again, a mad yearning to go through what Cieślak had been through stirred within me. This day spent with 'Poor Theatre' didn't hold much interest for many of the students,

[4] The wife-and-husband team of Zofia Petri (1928-1999) and Michał Pawlicki (1932-2000). Trans.

[5] Prof. Zbigniew Osiński (b. 1939) is one of the most prolific Polish scholars of Grotowski's work. He is the author of numerous books on Grotowski and the founding co-director of the Grotowski Centre in Wrocław in 1990, which has been known as the Grotowski Institute since 2006. Trans.

although the bug bit some of us and for the next few months in a studio we ineptly attempted to copy the Laboratorium actors' training. Of course, this became the subject of some barbed remarks from our peers and, it saddens me to mention, some ironic comments from our tutors. I learnt even then that heading in this direction wasn't going to be easy, which made me even more rebellious.

The passing of time and daily life made me start to 'grow up'. I finished drama school and joined the rat race, leaving behind my old dreams. I began working in theatres in Warsaw, attending film castings, and acting started to become a career – regardless of whether it brought me any satisfaction. None of it felt right.

One day I telephoned the Grotowski Centre again and, out of ignorance, I impudently asked whether Grotowski was still working and, if so, where. It was 1993 and at the time there was no information about this in Poland.[6] However, it turned out that he had settled in Pontedera, Italy, to continue his research. I felt sure he'd be running a theatre there, as he had in Poland, so I sent him a cheeky letter asking if he needed a Polish actor to join his company. I did this at the beginning of the year and then forgot all about it, preoccupied with settling down in the capital. Early in December, I received a telegram with information about taking part in the entrance evaluation. At first I was confused, but I realised that this was a reply to my forgotten letter. There was no time to give it much thought. It took me several days to tie up loose ends in Warsaw, not without a few problems. I took a risk and went to Pontedera. I knew if I were accepted that I'd have to spend the minimum term of a year at the Workcenter, for which I would have to be self-funded. Of course I didn't have these funds, but when asked about it, I managed to avoid giving a clear answer.

About a hundred people from all corners of the world participated in the selection process. It was very intensive work that lasted many hours a day, for a whole month. Gradually more and more people dropped out. I think that some of them couldn't bear the mad intensity of those selection days, which suggested that it would be similar or even more difficult later on. This intensity was to last all year round.

To my great surprise – as I also wasn't sure whether I wanted to devote myself so deeply to the work – I was admitted, along with four other people. That is how I started my one-year, or as it later turned out, five-year stay in Pontedera, Italy.

The first year of my apprenticeship at the Workcenter of Jerzy Grotowski was a real period of trials – a test of my character, strength of will, and mental and physical stamina. All I remember is that apart from the work, nothing else existed in my life then. (This probably went for the others too.) Besides, practically speaking, there was no time for anything else, as we used to spend about ten to fifteen hours in the workplace, six days a week.

I used to get up at 6am to learn English, which I didn't know very well. The work started at 10am and there was one short, half-hour break for a quick meal, then little breaks (for cigarettes) following each work session, which would last anything from

[6] This is Wasilkowski's personal perspective, since Grotowski had been awarded an honorary degree from the University of Wrocław in April 1990, and a year later had visited Poland to receive it, rousing widespread interest. Eds.

one to several hours. On my return home, often somewhere around 8-10pm, I'd have a large meal, which I would prepare and eat at about midnight. I'd fall into bed at about 1am. This was six days a week.

The work was sacred. No one was ever late, not even by a second. No one ever asked when the work would finish. It was a precise machine running like clockwork, to protect us from the kind of mediocrity that, unfortunately, I had often encountered before my arrival in Pontedera.

Throughout the whole working process there were very few words. Everything happened in the doing, in a continuous process of rehearsals, repetitions, actions, exercises, without unnecessary words and in complete honesty, to the full extent of our abilities, from the start right to the end of the day. I need to add that this was work within 'Art as vehicle', which required us to be in a state of constant, heightened readiness; it was like always having a high body temperature. By the way, in my case this was literal, as my body temperature fluctuated around 37°C and, as a result, I couldn't receive my yearly vaccine.[7] I was in a continuous pre-fever state, like Hans Castorp from *The Magic Mountain*.[8]

My first year at the Workcenter was unusual in that the work was carried out in constant seclusion. There were no tours or meetings with other theatre groups, as became the practice in subsequent years. That first year was truly monastic. The initial outline of the opus *Action* was created, day after day, without the presence of anyone from outside. Certainly the work was very difficult and physically demanding. I recall the first time Grotowski met the five of us just after we'd been admitted to the Workcenter for the first year. Pointing at me, he said to Thomas Richards, 'This boy is to weigh fifteen kilos less within three months, and there must be muscles instead of these folds of fat'. This happened as he had said.

This whole five-year period at the Workcenter largely did not vary in intensity from the first year. The only change was that it became more open to the outside world. Some of the people I was working with couldn't bear this intensity. It wasn't only about the psychophysical efforts, although these took us to the limits of our endurance. It was more about the way of life. Not everyone was able to accept that work became the only and exclusive substance of life. People often ask me if I experienced moments when I wanted to leave the Workcenter. I reply that I wanted to leave every day, but that's not true. I know colleagues who worked there for a long time also had some dilemmas. Those who wanted to stay at all costs and didn't have such quandaries soon ended up dropping out. This seemed to be governed by a strange, paradoxical rule.

What did I learn from the work at the Workcenter? Honesty, consistency, stamina, and how to be systematic. It also gave me solid tools to improve my means of expression and technique, mainly with regard to actor training and the Motions.[9] I am hon-

---

[7] It is commonly accepted in Poland, as well as in Russia and former Soviet countries, that a normal body temperature is 36.6°C based on an armpit reading. A temperature above this level is considered a 'pre-fever state' in which case it is advised that injections should not be given. Trans.

[8] Hans Castorp is the main character from Thomas Mann's 1924 novel. Eds.

[9] On the Motions, see I Wayan Lendra: 'Bali and Grotowski: Some parallels in the training process', in *The Grotowski Sourcebook*, ed. by Lisa Wolford and Richard Schechner (London and New York: Routledge, 1997; 2001), pp.

est whenever I go onstage and give to the full extent of my abilities. I don't calculate in order to resist the action; I don't work on a scene intellectually in order to hold myself back from the challenge of going into the unknown. As a result, I have a deep respect for theatre craft, which is as demanding and concrete as any other serious profession.

Consistency and stamina are qualities that lead to real results. Following my return from Italy to Poland, I had the chance to meet a few groups of young people who wanted to set up their own theatre companies. Their enthusiasm and eagerness were admirable, but unfortunately they lacked stamina and after a few weeks, when the first waves of emotion had subsided, everything ground to a halt. After years of working onstage, I've come to the realisation that the rudimentary things are the most difficult: getting to rehearsals on time, focusing your exclusive attention on the work, and being able to react in situations like when the group experiences a creative block and begins to drown in inertia.

Being systematic is fundamental if you want to get to know something in a profound way. For this reason, I haven't taught the Motions since I left Pontedera. I've been asked several times to give a few lessons on this complicated exercise. I refused. With the Motions, systematic, everyday practice is crucial. Having a grasp of the structure enables very little. I myself only slowly started to understand what this exercise is all about after arduously practising the Motions in the Workcenter every day for three years.

Actor training is another matter. In this case too, a higher level of understanding or reaching after something more subtle requires long-term and regular work. Before this happens however, you need to discover a basic, vital level – to discover or remind yourself of the organicity of your own body, which is particularly crucial for an actor. In the case of actor training, if certain breaks in practice are unavoidable, the effect is not so negative as with the Motions. Obviously I am referring here to training under the watchful eye of someone who is very knowledgeable in this area. Practising within a group or on your own without 'objective', outside feedback is very difficult, although it is possible. But it requires long-term practice until it becomes second nature and no external observer is necessary.

At the heart of the Workcenter's activity was the work on traditional songs led by Thomas Richards, with extensive help from Mario Biagini. They would consult with Jerzy Grotowski about certain matters following the work in the studio. During my first two to three years at the Workcenter, Grotowski appeared in the workspace regularly and often. Later, due to his health problems, his presence became less and less frequent. Discussing the songs is very difficult and complicated and I still don't feel competent to write about this. I believe I have worked on the Motions or the training to a certain level that allows me to teach them to others; however, with the songs of tradition, it is another matter. After five years of intensive work in Pontedera, I do not feel that the level of my knowledge about this subject is sufficient to teach or

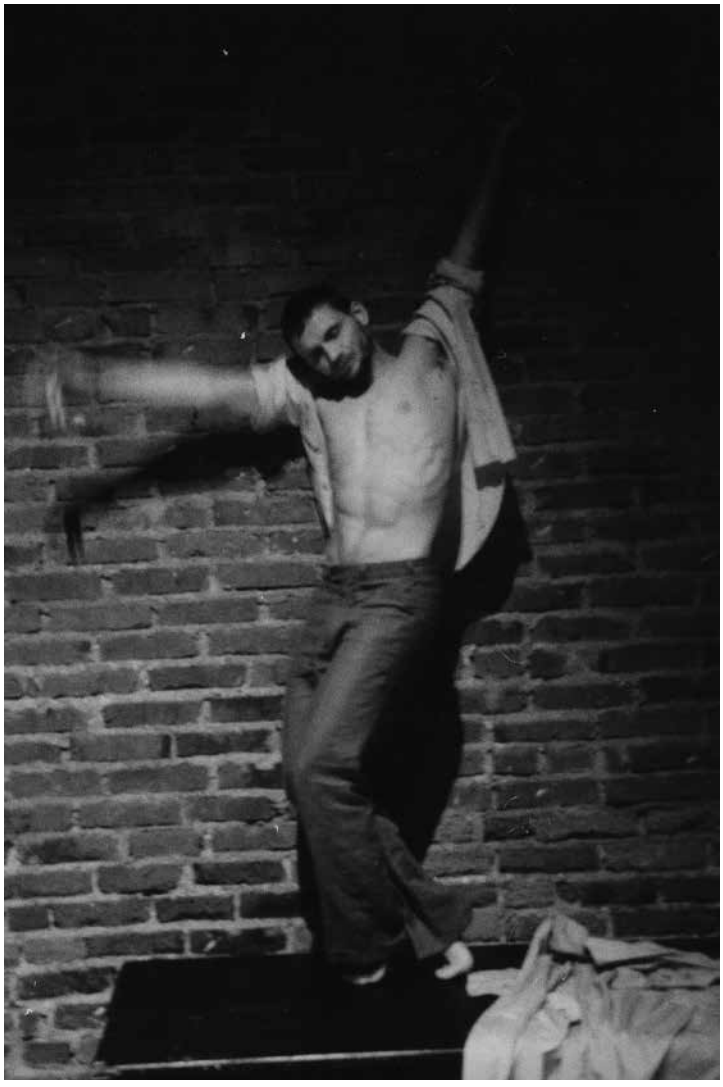
310-25; and Richards *At Work with Grotowski on Physical Actions*, pp. 52-55. Eds.

explore in my current practice this exceptional region of 'theatre as a vehicle'. In my opinion, there are only two competent people in this field: Richards and Biagini.

Besides, the work on the songs was so intimate and valuable to me that it would never occur to me to use it in the 'Theatre of Productions', in which field I am working today. I also think that irresponsible use of these songs can be risky or even dangerous, according to a certain meaning of the word.

I must acknowledge that what really attracted me to Grotowski was his experience of working with the actor not the Performer. To discover the whole sphere of awareness that is discussed in his text 'Performer', was to me an exceptional and essential experience, but it is something that I'm trying to keep separate in my current theatre jobs.[10]

The practice at the Workcenter concentrated mainly on the actor's body and on songs. The spoken text was limited to a minimum. What currently interests me is text and its meaning. It could perhaps be said that I have gone full circle and returned to my beginnings. As for my current work in the theatre, the lessons I learned from my two 'godparents', Petri and Pawlicki, at drama school are equally as important as the experience from Pontedera. Some means of expression that I gained at the Workcenter have appeared ineffectual in the Theatre of Productions. On my return from Italy, I had to go through a long process of adaptation in order to be able to stand on a so-called 'traditional' stage again.



Wasilkowski in *Dr Faustus's Lament* (1999).
Photograph: Jan Sobolewski; courtesy of the author.

In this respect, a particular area of difficulty is the creation of a montage. In Art as vehicle, this is undertaken within the performer, without regard for any potential external witness to the action. However, in the Theatre of Productions, you need to take into account the spectator, to listen to them, react, and never forget about their presence. This is also relevant to acting technique: in vocal projection, in physical expression, in the type of contact with the stage partner. It differs, although not hugely. The core of this difference in my opinion lies in the shared experience of the actor and the spectator. If the actor's awareness becomes too remote, a particular hermeticism occurs. I experienced this when I was presenting the first versions of my monodrama *Lament Doctoris Fausti* (Dr Faustus's Lament), which I made two years after I came back from

[10] See Grotowski, 'Performer', in *The Grotowski Sourcebook*, pp. 376-80.

Pontedera. I know from the spectators' feedback that those first presentations were received as beautiful and extremely precise, they showed unusual acting artistry, but they lacked one thing – the piece was not moving for a spectator. I was so tightly closed within my perfected inner world that the spectator viewed me as if behind a wall. After this experience, I realised that if I wanted to carry on with my profession, I needed to come down to earth and change my attitude to many practical things.

When now, after more than ten years, I wonder about how the work at the Grotowski Workcenter developed me as an actor, I notice a few basic things. First of all, my body became an efficient instrument and its vitality – which had been blocked by a one-dimensional school education – has settled into its natural place. Before Pontedera, my stage characters, devoid of this vital power, often 'lacked balls', to use a colloquialism. The approach to actor training I learned at Pontedera has been very helpful and to this day forms a stable element in my professional preparation as well as my teaching.

Another aspect is how the actor's attention can be projected in two directions simultaneously: towards the inside and the outside. This type of attention is indispensable for active presence onstage, and I owe this development to the Motions, which I have continued to practise, even though I don't teach them. These basic practical abilities are a credit to Richards and Biagini, who taught them with diligence, patience, and great devotion.

Last but not least, the ethics and ethos of work, a sense of artistic dignity. I learned this from Grotowski. I remember one conversation when he said that an artist could compromise a great deal in life, but only up to a certain limit: their own creativity. There is no scope for any compromise there, otherwise the person will die as an artist. Jerzy Grotowski's life, his presence, has been a great, invaluable gift for me to this day. As an actor I change continuously, my awareness – and thus my acting technique – evolves constantly, but what really helps in my professional life is the memory of a few thoughts, sentences, moments, glances, and decisions by and from this great theatre artist.

Richards and Biagini led all of the practical sessions at the Workcenter. In the workspace, I used to meet with Grotowski mainly to talk to him about the individual étude I created during my first year. But we often met outside work, for private talks about our individual development. I will give one example to clarify the specific nature of these meetings. A two-hour-long meeting in a restaurant, drinking coffee or cognac. Grotowski asks a question that is seemingly unconnected with work, he listens, often remains silent for a while, asks another question. The conversation is informal, casual. At the end, he suggests a book to read, which I receive a few days later. I read it in my spare time, but I don't understand what purpose it might serve. Three months later, I fall into a state of internal regression and suddenly I discover that the book he gave me to read back then is a precise reflection of my state, showing me a way out of this difficult situation.

Another example. At a certain stage of my work on the songs, I was not able to bring my own body properly under control. When the dynamic of the inner process

intensified, my body shivered as though in a fever. After a long time I was still unable to find a way beyond this, and Grotowski asked me to come and see him. When I arrived, he didn't say anything, but just asked me to sit down and watch something on video. It was a recording of *The Constant Prince*. After it finished, I listened to a few words. This was enough of a prompt for me to begin to cope with my problem. Grotowski knew about my fascination with Cieślak, about whom I would often ask him questions during private meetings. I was writing my MA dissertation about this great actor, and wanted to deepen my knowledge.

To summarise, Grotowski was not present in person in the practical work, but nevertheless knew a great deal about each of us. He knew exactly what stage of development we had reached and, with a genius that is typical of him alone, could then influence our means of development. This was until 1998. Later, his health suddenly started to deteriorate significantly. His contact with the members of the group reduced to almost nothing. To me, however, this was an exceptional year, perhaps the most important in my five-year stay at the Workcenter. Grotowski needed someone who would support him and could be available twenty-four hours a day. I cannot now remember why, but he chose me. My presence in the workspace became less and less frequent, and in the last months of 1998 I didn't work at all, devoting my time exclusively to Jerzy Grotowski. I came to understand more than ever during that final year.

Many people would probably be interested in how I remember Jerzy Grotowski from those last years. Most of all, I remember his smile. It was a very specific smile, of a kind I've noticed on the faces of other extraordinary people I've met in my life. This smile was always the same. For a long time, however, I couldn't work out whether it contained an understanding of human weaknesses, irony, acceptance, or a certain distance towards the world and its problems. There was something mysterious about it that I wasn't able to describe. That was until one day, when I found a photo in a book depicting a small Chinese figure. This was the figure of an elderly man smiling and leaning on a walking stick. It was the same type of smile as Grotowski's. I read the inscription below the photo which said: 'The archetype of an Elderly Man, who has seen enough of life, is eternally true'.

TRANSLATED BY JUSTYNA DROBNIK-ROGERS

He Smelted Gold Out of People

STEFANIA GARDECKA TALKS TO GRZEGORZ ZIÓŁKOWSKI

STEFANIA GARDECKA was the administrative assistant in Jerzy Grotowski's Teatr Laboratorium in Wrocław, from 1966-1984. She led the international section of the Kalambur Theatre in Wrocław, directed by Bogusław Litwiniec, from 1985-1990, and she served as General Secretary of the Międzynarodowy Festiwal Teatru Otwartego (International Festival of Open Theatre) in 1987. In 1990, together with Zbigniew Osiński and Alina Obidniak, she co-initiated the work of the Grotowski Centre in Wrocław, and has continued her collaboration with that institution since. Elsewhere, in 1983, she took on the position of General Secretary of the Międzynarodowy Festiwal Teatrów Ulicznych (International Festival of Street Theatres) in Jelenia Góra, organised by the Teatr im. Cypriana Norwida (Norwid Theatre) and directed by Alina Obidniak. And from 1999-2000, she worked with the Stowarzyszenie Tratwa (Raft Association) in Olsztyn, directed by Ryszard Michalski, and organised the Akademia Kultury (Culture Academy), including a three-year project led by James Slowiak and Jairo Cuesta (USA), as well as other artists. She is now retired and lives in Wrocław.

This interview took place on the night of 18-19 April 2000 in Olsztyn, and was originally published as 'Wytapiał z ludzi złoto', ed. by Grzegorz Janikowski and Grzegorz Ziółkowski, *Pamiętnik Teatralny*, 1-2 (2001), 138-49. The text includes minor revisions made by Gardecka with the editors of the English edition.

Grzegorz Ziółkowski: Is it possible to write a history of the Teatr Laboratorium?

Stefania Gardecka: Zbigniew Osiński has already written this history, very precisely and reliably.

Ziółkowski: Haven't you wanted to write it from your own point of view?

Gardecka: After the dissolution of the Teatr Laboratorium I didn't feel such a need.[1] This [desire] surfaced later and was quite strong, so I was looking for somebody who I could talk to. I needed a person who would be open, but all the interlocutors I met already had their own approach, and my information would serve only as a support for their theories.

Ziółkowski: Does this mean that you gave up the idea?

Gardecka: I guess not. Now, so many years after Grotowski dissolved the Teatr Laboratorium, I have gained an appropriate distance from the past. I think that the history of this group can be conveyed through a description of the work and life of, let's say, a fictitious troupe of medieval craftspeople. The reality could be shown through this fiction. Perhaps in this way the transmission would be more precise.

Ziółkowski: Is the existing transmission untruthful?

Gardecka: Yes and no. It is based on documents and is in accordance with them, but this does not mean that it is true. Paper documents, although important, are secondary sources. They are derivative, especially if we take into account the time in which we lived [under communism] and the type of balancing act we had to perform in our paperwork. The most essential things weren't included in documents. They happened between people, during the work, during rehearsals, performances, and everyday encounters, and these remained engraved in people. It is also quite difficult to find objective words to

[1] This was in 1984. All footnotes are by the editors.

describe this kind of experience without getting into pathos, exaltation. Furthermore, everything that was important was said, done, and written down by Grotowski himself. Sometimes he gave us directions, where to look for answers…

In Leszek Kolankiewicz's flat [in Warsaw], back in 1980, Grotowski asked us (there were four of us) to read *The Glory of the Empire* by Jean d'Ormesson and to pay attention to its final pages. But he didn't tell us exactly which pages. I found them anyway. The message, I think, was addressed to Leszek Kolankiewicz, with whom Grotowski had been friends for ages. I hope that Leszek will write this book. This is the text:

> We have come to the place and the moment where our fates divide. I vanish from the world where all fades and passes away. Do you stay, to tell future generations what were our struggles and our dreams? Every man has but one life – a few years, much suffering, much sorrow, which all end in death. Tell those who come after us to believe and hope, and to do something with their brief passage on earth and among men. We have done some fine things. Let them do others, finer. Do not tell them how to act, how to think, or how to love; just tell them what we were and what we did. The others will be different and act differently. Everything about the earth is good – happiness and tears, war and peace, sun and water, indifference and passion, suffering and death. We have to believe all is well. I am not going out of scorn for life but to live more and better. I am going because we die. Others remain – may they be blessed. Some will hate and despise me – may they be blessed. Many will think the best thing is to laugh at the world and be amused by it – may they be blessed. Some will overcome them and bend them to their law – may they be blessed. Others will arise and lay these low – may they be blessed also. May the world, and life, be blessed, and suffering and death. Just tell the world what we were and what we did. And add a little beauty to beauty, a little history to history, a little world to the world and a little life to life.[2]

Ziółkowski: Let's talk about your work at the Teatr Laboratorium.

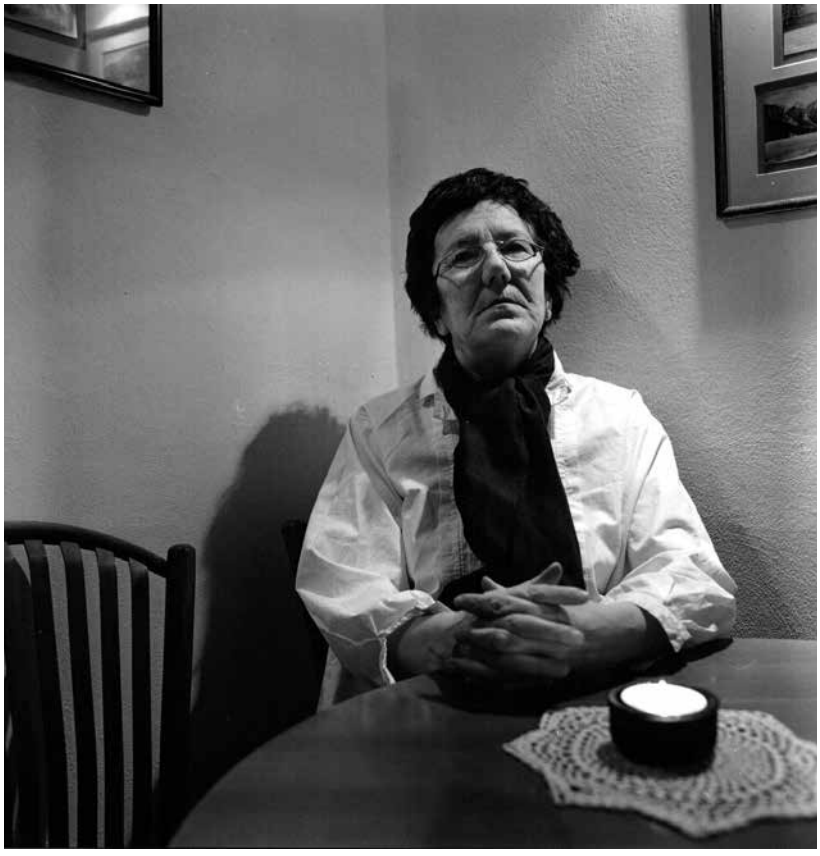
Gardecka: Okay. I started working as a secretary in 1966 and ended up in 1984 working as Deputy Manager of Administration. Going for my first job interview with Grotowski, I passed the closed door of the Teatr Laboratorium space on the second floor. I imagined people in white uniforms smelting gold in a furnace amongst the fumes. Some kind of alchemy…

Ziółkowski: What was your work exactly?

Gardecka: Until 1975, our administration team consisted of three people only: Jędrzej Sell (Administrative Manager), Olga Piech (Head Accountant from 1965 to 1984), and me. What did I do? Various things. I ran the office and dealt with correspondence, of which there was a great deal, and I did the evening work with Grotowski.. I made phone calls, reservations, and ticket sales; I had front-of-house duties during the performances, such as ushering in the spectators and taking care of the box office. I also dealt with bills, the actors' wages. Part of my duties involved replying to international mail, but there was no fax or email, or even a direct international telephone connection. All correspondence in foreign languages was sent by telegram. I had to spell out each word over the phone to the post office clerks. In addition, I looked after our *stagiaires* (apprentices) and arranged accommodation for them.

My duties also involved dealing with all our actors' living and health matters, customs clearance, transport, the printing of theatre programmes and posters, and passport and visa issues. Writing reports and statistics was part of my role too. I organised Grotowski's trips, his meetings, conferences, and interviews. Later, I dealt with the paratheatrical projects as well. We had a group of young Polish 'apprentices'. They were people who were engaged in the work 'around the theatre', and they helped me a lot. However, during the Theatre of Sources project for instance, from June to August 1980 I had to live for three months in the office, as there was so much work. The organisational centre of this project was located in Wrocław and the activities were in Brzezinka and Ostrowina, near Oleśnica, where Grotowski and Teo Spychalski worked with about a

[2] Jean d'Ormesson, *The Glory of the Empire* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1974), p. 345.



Stefania Gardecka, Wrocław, 2009.
Photograph: Francesco Galli.

hundred people. Every seven days I would send a group of ten people there and they would return to Wrocław after five days. This continued throughout the project. There was a plague of mosquitoes at that time and we didn't have any remedy for it in Poland, so we had to invent something. In the end we discovered an old folk recipe (*spirytus* and carnation oil), which worked well![3]

Participants came from many countries: Haiti, India, Mexico, Colombia, Japan, the United States, and from across Europe. There were various diets and different customs. The project administrative section based in Oleśnica dealt with the supplies, medical care, and all the other issues. This centre was run by Helena Żurad, Piotr Rodowicz, Wojtek [Wojciech] Chełmiński, and Danuta Ciechowicz-Chwastniewska. There were also many volunteers from Poland and abroad who worked with us. In Brzezinka we organised a nursery for our small children, run by Baśka [Barbara] Bednarska from Warsaw, Małgosia [Małgorzata] Świątek, and Jairo Cuesta's wife, Dominique.

Ziółkowski: Ludwik Flaszen has said that Grotowski kept you in a continuous state of readiness…

Gardecka: …and dragged us out of bed at night. Yes, that's true; you never knew whether you would need to go to work at night. Sometimes a situation needed immediate intervention. For instance, the threat of closing us down had always been in the air. A question mark hung over the theatre-'s existence every season. In 1966, we had to defend ourselves against some kind of vicious press attack. So we had to organise an impromptu action and write a response. The journalist Jerzy Falkowski was called in from Warsaw; Flaszen, Grotowski, and I were sitting in the office upstairs writing for three days and nights! I was typing on an old typewriter the text he was dictating, which was continuously corrected by Grot, and an exhausted Ludwik was sleeping behind the curtain. When we finished, at dawn, we went by taxi to the railway station to eat something.[4] Grot was telling jokes. Despite the awful tiredness, I was happy. Like a farmer after hard work in the fields.

Ziółkowski: Did you observe rehearsals?

Gardecka: No, rehearsals were closed and no one apart from the actors could take part in them. Sometimes Ludwik was invited. The only people from the outside who could take part in the exercises were the *stagiaires*. For instance, Teo Spychalski, who was a student of Polish literature, came from Toruń (he had studied under Professor Csató) in order to do research for his Master's degree, and he was allowed to take part in the exercises.[5] Later, Grotowski employed him at the

[3] *Spirytus* is a very strong Polish alcohol (often around 95% alcohol by volume) used largely for medicinal purposes.

[4] During communism in Poland, railway station bars were usually the only places where one could eat out at night.

[5] Edward Csató (1915-1968) was an essayist, lecturer, and theatre critic whose writing influenced the development of Polish post-war theatre criticism. For many years, Csató was the chief editor of *Teatr*, one of Poland's most prestigious theatre periodicals.

theatre and he ran the International Studio for fourteen years, working with the *stagiaires*. He also led a second group in Ostrowina during Theatre of Sources, as Grotowski's adviser.[6] In 1980 he moved to Canada where he still runs his own theatre today: Le Groupe de la Veillée, in Montreal.[7]

Ziółkowski: Many people wanted to have contact with Grotowski; it seems that you had to act as a kind of a shield for him.

Gardecka: As a result of the presentation of work at the Theatre of Nations in 1966 in Paris, the Teatr Laboratorium became famous, and various people from abroad wanted to include Grotowski in their visits and travels around Poland. The Ministry sent us official guests. But for Grot the most important thing was his work. He didn't have time for anything else. In the end, he wrote a strongly worded letter to the Theatre Department at the Ministry of Culture, with a request to stop putting him in such demanding situations. Grotowski argued that if he were to meet all these people, he wouldn't be able to work at all. Besides, he believed that both sides should want to meet, not just one.

Ziółkowski: What about conflicts during the work with Grotowski? Were there any?

Gardecka: During the period of almost twenty years that I worked there, my behaviour (rather than me myself) was treated harshly by Grot only twice. The first time took place two months after he had employed me. When I was signing my contract, Ola [Piech] told me that the rehearsal room is a sacred place and nobody except the actors is allowed to enter. And the actors did not come to our tiny office on the third floor. There was simply no space. The office was divided into three parts. Grotowski sat behind a black curtain, the twelve *stagiaires* had their dressing room in the second section, and the third part was the space where Ola, Jędrzej, and I worked.

Only Majka [Maja] Komorowska and Antek [Antoni] Jahołkowski were allowed to come to us to sort out the actors' business. Once, when a rehearsal was going on, I received a phone call from an important person from the Party Committee who assertively asked me if he could speak to Grotowski. So I went to this sacred place and through Andrzej Paluchiewicz – who was an actor also working as stage manager, and to whom I explained the situation – I asked for Grot to come. Grotowski left the room and started to roar at me saying that it was insolent to interrupt his work. Of course, he refused to come to the phone. So, I had to explain this to the party official. It was a good lesson for me. I never interrupted him at work again during those years; I understood his request.

The second time took place when I broke one of the rules. Before the performance there was always one hour of silence for the actors and nobody could wander about on the stairs near the dressing rooms. At that time I was dealing with everything: selling tickets and programmes, ushering in the spectators, and being on duty during the performance. Once I forgot to get the programmes from the office. So I was quietly climbing the stairs, trying to avoid the creaky steps, and of course I stepped on one. Grot somehow heard it and came out of the dressing room. He looked at me but he did not say anything. He came downstairs to where I was and confronted me… He didn't want to hear any explanation. I had broken the rules and there was no mercy.

This gives you an idea how seriously the work was treated. But working for him inspired us creatively and enabled us to reach new heights. All the rules were clear. Everybody knew their duties and had freedom in their field of work. What was most important was that you always knew your main goal; you knew why you were doing something. Everyone was treated with respect, but also everybody had to contribute to the theatre.

[6] The village of Ostrowina is about four kilometres from the premises in Brzezinka.

[7] For more information on the company, see the interview with Teo Spychalski, 'On the Long and Winding Road', elsewhere in this volume, pp. 150-60 (p. 160), and also <http://www.laveillee.qc.ca/>.

In the 1960s the actors used to clean the theatre. I remember Majka [Komorowska] in tight ski trousers and wellington boots cleaning the stairs. Everyone had their tasks. The stairs were wooden and unvarnished, so we had to look after them. When I was working, the actors didn't disturb me because they knew that I was busy. Of course it was different with the people from the outside, who were called 'satellites'. They wanted so much to be around. I threw out all the chairs from my tiny office and left only one chair for a single person. But this didn't help and they just kept sitting on the floor or under the desk. When Grot would pass by on the way to his office, he used to say 'Well, you have a court at your feet'. In the end, I had to put up a note: 'If you have nothing to do, please don't do it here'. At that time I didn't understand why they wanted to hang around so much. Later I came to understand, when our theatre was dissolved and I myself was looking for a similar place and couldn't find one… Now, in 2009, I understand that the reason this place attracted people was that they wanted to be close.

When I worked with Grot, we would close the doors and take the phones off the hook and put a note on the door: 'We are working'. We concentrated fully on what we were doing and ignored everything else. The quality of the work was different. It was like active meditation. Now I see so much chaos; people work and do many things simultaneously, yet nothing is done well and they are exhausted. The energy doesn't go up!

Ziółkowski: You had strict rules regarding the performances. Did you ever let anyone in after a performance had started?

Gardecka: Yes and no. Performances started at 7pm sharp. The Town Hall clock would strike seven and we would close the door on the seventh strike. It was impossible to enter later, because the door was locked and the action had started. Latecomers would distract everybody. It was a small audience (usually between 33 and 44, sometimes 80 people). At the beginning we had many latecomers. I even made a special note that we stamped onto the tickets requesting the spectators to 'Please arrive on time'. The performance space was filled with such a kind of energy that you could die there but not leave.

One day, a flight from Warsaw with an Italian director on board, who had come especially from Rome, was late. As he was late, he wasn't allowed to enter the space. I was trying to explain this to him, but he ignored me and went up the stairs. Within a moment he was back – he hadn't been expecting to find another supervised entry point. When I saw his face so full of determination, I felt sorry for him, I just couldn't leave him like that, despite the ban. I didn't know what to do. But suddenly I remembered a hole in the curtain from the dressing room side. I took his hand and without saying anything, we left the building and went to the actors' entrance. I led him to the second floor where there was the black curtain. The actors had already started and Grotowski was there, so we sneaked in very quietly. I showed him the hole in the curtain. He understood instantly.

Ziółkowski: Did you confess this to Grotowski?

Gardecka: No, I didn't tell him anything. The actors probably told him, but because he didn't say anything to me, he likely understood that I had a reason to do what I did. He was a wise man and besides, he trusted me.

Ziółkowski: It wasn't easy to arrange many things in those days. How did you manage?

Gardecka: That's true. Sometimes it was really difficult. There were often heroic efforts. For example in 1975, in order to save Jean-Louis Barrault the trouble of travelling by train, Jędrzej Sell wanted to hire a sports plane to bring him to Warsaw. But we didn't manage – it was night and there wasn't enough time. In the end, he was taken in a truck. We just put a comfortable bed in the back so he could sleep during the journey.

When I heard 'That is not allowed' or 'It's not possible', it spurred me on to fight. I would then put on a red beret from Paris, a gift from Tomek [Tomasz] Rodowicz, and I would be ready for combat.[8] Grot did not

[8] Tomasz Rodowicz presently directs the Chorea Thea-

take 'no' for an answer. You couldn't just tell him that it wasn't possible to arrange something. This just wasn't the way. I've realised that if you are determined enough, the person you are dealing with will help you in the end. You just have to pile on such pressure that this person is not only unable to refuse to help but often feels obliged to help. People want to help you, if they feel that something is truly important for you.

Later, Grotowski's fame helped and made it easier, but he wasn't known everywhere. For example, getting paper for printing the programmes or posters was an achievement. We had allocations, but obviously these were too small. Jędrzej Sell used his personal charm. We each had our own methods.

Ziółkowski: Could you give us some examples?

Gardecka: There was one deal that Włodek [Włodzimierz] Staniewski and I made.[9] When the old mill in Brzezinka was purchased, we didn't have any electricity there. But there was a waterfall that we could use as a power source. We needed a turbine. Włodek came up with this genius idea of getting one from the shipyard in Gdańsk. He was rubbing his hands with excitement. So we locked ourselves in Grot's office and set to work. I was going to make the phone call. We considered this a historic mission. I phoned the director of the shipyard and told him about the problem. He replied: 'Oh, you artists…' He knew straightaway that we were lay people but he helped us. We got the equipment and it was installed.

Now, I think the fact that Grot required so much from us gave us strength. This helped us to overcome the objective difficulties and our own limitations. This made us work effectively and filled us with energy and creativity.

Ziółkowski: What was your take on the physical metamorphosis of Grot?

Gardecka: When Grot came back from his famous journey to India [July to August 1970] and the fat Jerzy had become the thin Jerzyk, perfidious human nature started testing how much he had changed, how much he had softened, and whether he would still be so demanding. I started easing off, saying: 'You know Grot, this will be difficult to arrange'. And he took this with such trust that it made me feel guilty. I realised then that I should take some time off from the theatre and have some rest.

Ziółkowski: Did you do that?

Gardecka: Yes, despite Grot's reluctance. He did not want me to go. Convincing him and keeping my position took about two years. I found somebody to replace me and I went to London to brush up my English.

Ziółkowski: After his metamorphosis, Grotowski very often met with young people. Could you say something about this?

Gardecka: Yes, after his metamorphosis he became one of them. Before, I had the impression that he was walking alone on the frosted peaks of mountains, in his black suit, black sunglasses, and black hat. And now it was time to come down into the valleys. When we went to Warsaw with our performances, along with Andrzej Paluchiewicz and Tomek Rodowicz he would wander incognito around the cafés and student clubs, meeting young people, speaking with them, drinking and inviting them to see *Apocalypsis cum Figuris*. He became one of them.

But there were also more organised meetings in Wrocław. Many people wrote letters asking to meet him. When he had time, he used to invite them to Wrocław and conducted three-day-long 'meeting marathons'. He invited all of them, but met with each of them individually. They waited for their turn in the second theatre space (which is currently the cinema room). They played music, sang songs, sometimes they did some theatre études while the individual meetings with Grot took place in his office.

One day Grot asked me to take part in one of the meetings. It was only in the middle that I realised that the visitor was a journalist from Warsaw, so for sure Grot wanted to have a witness to avoid his words being twisted. It later turned out that the meeting was about

tre Association. He formerly worked for Gardzienice Theatre Association.

[9] Staniewski has been artistic director of Gardzienice Theatre Association since its beginnings in 1977.

consulting Grotowski on a philosophical term that he had used. Now I appreciate the effort of this journalist, who came especially from Warsaw to clarify one term.

When Grot wanted me to hear the conversation, he would leave the door open. This didn't happen often. But if it did, he would later ask for my opinion about the visitor. I was often very ruthless in my judgment; he would say to me 'Stefcia, could you do it with a sword instead of an axe?' I think he needed somebody who would share some honest thoughts with him, without beating about the bush. When I tried to be rational and intellectual, wiser than I am, he would say to me 'Don't make anything up; just tell me what your intuition is telling you'.

Ziółkowski: Did Grotowski have a gift for meeting people?

Gardecka: Yes, especially after his metamorphosis. He had long hair and wore clear glasses, a rucksack, and Jesus-type sandals on his bare feet.[10] Meeting him was something unusual. He rose above the ordinary – but in a real way – and you somehow rose with him. He kept you in a state of suspense and attention, and you had to be 'here and now'. He treated you like somebody who deserves respect. He raised you up to the level of his own uniqueness. I often thought that he saw people in a different way, that he could see what was invisible. And this way of perceiving others often caused people in his company really to raise their game and exceed their limits; they became great.

And sometimes these changes were permanent and his influence inspired people. What I said about him 'smelting gold out of people' was not only a metaphor – he really brought out all their hidden nobility, goodness, and wisdom.

Now, when I meet young people who didn't encounter Grotowski but who know that I had some contact with him, this 'golden' part starts to activate itself in them. I think that even Grot's name somehow causes people to open up, to forget about their fears and limitations; it brings the best out of them.

Ziółkowski: When did you start calling Grotowski by his first name rather than formally as 'Pan' [Mr]?

Gardecka: It was when he returned to Poland so physically changed. Quite naturally, we then all started calling each other by our first names. From that time I used to address him as 'Grot'. I never called him Jerzy. I just couldn't say it, it sounded so official.

Before *The University of Research of the Theatre of Nations* [*Uniwersytet Poszukiwań Teatru Narodów*] project began in 1975, I was in London. Grot sent me a telegram and asked me to return. We met in his flat on Kościuszko Street in order to plan the strategy for the work and then, at the beginning of the conversation, he said to me: 'You can call me Boss'. Now this may sound like a scene from *The Godfather*. But in the Teatr Laboratorium it meant a degree of the highest familiarity. Only the actors called him that. And this word was assigned only for them. It hurt me a great deal when random people addressed Grotowski with this term. I felt they didn't have the right, it was an abuse. And now when I watch [Peter] Brook's *Mahabharata* and hear Cieślak saying the word 'Krishna', I feel the same intonation in his voice as when he used to pronounce the word Boss. Full of love, respect...[11]

Ziółkowski: Did you remain in the office when the group travelled?

Gardecka: I stayed for the first two years. Later, I travelled with them. But I didn't take part in all the tours. The first time, I went with them to London in 1968. We played *The Constant Prince* in a church crypt. Grotowski was in the United States then and Cieślak replaced him. I was helping our English organiser to collect the costumes after the performance. They were soaked through with sweat. She was washing them and drying them somewhere, so they would be ready for the next performance. Staszek

[10] In his earlier 'incarnation', Grotowski had always worn dark glasses.

[11] From 1985-1989, Cieślak collaborated with Peter Brook on the *Mahabharata*, playing the role of the blind king Dhritarashtra.

[Stanisław] Scierski was acting in a beret, which was also dripping with sweat. I wanted to dry it as quickly as possible. I put it on the light bulb of a lamp on a side table. At first, the beret started to burn and then it was smoking. Rysiek [Ryszard Cieślak] found out about this somehow. He called me in. The actors were still wearing their togas from the performance. Cieślak was standing high up on the construction, wearing jeans and smoking a cigarette. He started with 'Do you know what you've done?' And I gave him a very factual reply: 'Well, I burnt a hole in Staszek's beret, so I will buy him a new one, exactly the same, tomorrow'. For me it was just a beret. The tone of my reply made Ryszard mad. He started walking around with his cigarette and said: 'For you it is just an ordinary beret. But it's not. It's our sweat, blood, and tears. And this doesn't mean anything to you. To you, this is a beret!!! But it's like a relic for us!'

I felt I had done something unforgivable. I wondered whether I should get down on my knees and lie prostrate, as though in church. I was desperate, ashamed, but at the same time I felt how ridiculous the whole thing was. Staszek [Scierski], who was there too, couldn't stand the tension and said: 'Rysiek, give her a break. I have a spare beret with me'. After that, every costume was like a relic to me.

When Cieślak died in the United States, his daughter, Agnieszka, brought his ashes to Wrocław and put the urn in the theatre space on the platform from *The Constant Prince*. Somebody placed the red shroud from *The Constant Prince* there and Zbigniew Kozłowski brought some Greek music, which Cieślak had particularly liked. Once when I was thinking about him at that time, and remembering that scene from London, I noticed that there, next to me, was Franek [Franciszek] Pikiński, the landlord from Brzezinka and a friend of Cieślak's who was crying and praying on the bench from *Apocalypsis*. I felt like I was in a church. Suddenly my twelve-year-old son Piotr came along and asked us what we were doing: 'What's in that box?' I told him: 'These are Ryszard's ashes'. Being so young, it was abstract for him. He started to laugh, and asked: 'Is so little left of a man?' *He* [Cieślak] *ran to touch the horizon*.[12]

*

Ziółkowski: Grotowski's health deteriorated when Martial Law was introduced in Poland.

Gardecka: It was a shock for him, even though I think he was expecting it. Poland was like a mother to him. Grot was always ill. I was used to that. The beginning of the 1980s was painful for him for many reasons. In 1982, Jacek Zmysłowski died in New York – he was only twenty-eight. Grot had treated him as his successor, as he later did with Thomas [Richards]. It was upsetting for all of us. A year before, in September, Antoś [Antoni] Jahołkowski had also died. Later, in 1985, Małgorzata Świątek-Spurring died in London. She had been Jacek's assistant on the paratheatrical projects.

In the summer of 1982, the next phase of Theatre of Sources took place in Ostrowina. Grot wasn't well; he hardly left his room. He felt cold all the time. Despite the heat, he wore his black suit. Jarek [Jarosław] Musiał kept vigil next door all the time. He looked after him. My office was in a meadow under a tree in Franek Pikiński's field. Whenever Grot needed me, I took a bike and put all the required paperwork in the saddlebag. Taking a shortcut, I rode through the fields and a lane that was full of sand in order to get to Grot in Ostrowina.

Our last conversation [before the dissolution of the theatre] was about his journey to Italy, to Pontedera (12 August 1982) and the Teatr Laboratorium's twenty-fifth anniversary. The next meeting took place after nine years in Wrocław, at Marta Jahołkowska's flat, where we were sitting around a table with Grot's other friends. We were eating and drinking, celebrating the honorary doctorate given to Grot by the University of Wrocław.

[12] This phrase is a reference to 'Running to Touch the Horizon', an interview with Ryszard Cieślak by Marzena Torzecka, trans. by Susan Bassnett, *New Theatre Quarterly*, 8 (1992), 261-63.

Ziółkowski: Could you tell me about Grotowski's last visit to Wrocław, when he came with the group from Pontedera? It was as if he wanted to fulfil something; he wanted to show *Action* in Poland?

Gardecka: I didn't ask him about it, so I cannot tell you. Although I was so glad that he was coming back and that I would be able to see him. But it was a sad visit as Grotowski was already very ill. I was waiting for him in reception at the Monopol Hotel. Staszek [Stanisław] Krotoski[13] and Professor Janusz Degler[14] brought him from the airport. I was sitting in the hall and in my bag I had some hot, Russian-style dumplings without any salt, which were made by my mum at Grot's personal request. At last they arrived. Grot moved slowly, he had trouble breathing. He was very tired and had to sit down. I couldn't believe it – he was walking like an old man. I couldn't accept that. We took the lift to his room. We spoke for a while. The dumplings were left for later.

I often accompanied him for meals at the Monopol Hotel during this visit. We ate there; we did not talk much. I could see how unwell he was. Besides, I felt that conversation was somehow inappropriate. The best way to behave in that situation was silence and co-existence. We read the papers: he would read one page and I would read the next. This could happen when we were on our own. But whenever Staszek Krotoski, the Manager of the Grotowski Centre appeared, Grot changed completely: he was humorous, he kept his spirits up. It was difficult for me to witness that.

My last meeting with him was the day (or rather the night) before he left Poland. He asked me to come at 2am and help pack his things. I helped him. I couldn't fold his shirts properly, so he showed me how to do it. He was tired and impatient, and breathing with difficulty.

Ziółkowski: Did you see *Action*?

Gardecka: Yes. I had seen all the productions made by the Teatr Laboratorium in Wrocław and they had such a powerful effect on me that I didn't want to watch them too often. They were like the natural elements, earth and fire. But I could watch *Action* many times. It was like *Apocalypsis*, but on a different level. The performers [Grotowski called them 'doers'] weren't on the earth any more but rose above it. *Action* was at the level of the air. During the post-*Action* meetings with the audience it was possible to say which participants had experienced an encounter with the Holy Spirit and which had remained untouched.

I received *Action* with all my senses. For the first time I felt aesthetic ecstasy. My body reacted, my breath started to deepen, my back started to straighten and I felt as though in a state of meditation. These figures in white that were moving in a slowed-down rhythm and singing poignant songs sent me into a kind of hypnosis. Just when I had plunged into it as in a dream, the piece ended. I felt like somebody had wounded me with a knife. I was desperate that it was the end and that we had to exit and leave that place.

Ziółkowski: Thank you very much for this conversation.

Gardecka: I'm grateful, too, because thanks to this, I have been able spend a few hours in the past that is so close to my heart…

TRANSLATED BY JUSTYNA DROBNIK-ROGERS

---

[13] Stanisław Krotoski was Director of the Grotowski Centre in Wrocław from 1991 to 2004.

[14] Janusz Degler is a Wrocław theatre academic, a specialist on the works of Stanisław Ignacy Witkiewicz (Witkacy), and was sponsor of Jerzy Grotowski's honorary degree from Wrocław University in 1990. Grotowski received it on 10 April 1991.

On the Long and Winding Road

TEO SPYCHALSKI TALKS TO GRZEGORZ ZIÓŁKOWSKI

Teo Spychalski worked with Jerzy Grotowski from 1967 to 1981. He studied literature and theatre at Nicolaus Copernicus University in Toruń and wrote his Master's thesis on the Teatr Laboratorium's acting technique and productions. In 1967 he was invited to join the Teatr Laboratorium, first as an actor-apprentice and then as Grotowski's assistant. From 1972 he directed the Teatr Laboratorium's International Studio for foreign students/apprentices and work participants. He collaborated closely with Grotowski on various projects during the post-theatrical phase, up to and including Theatre of Sources and, during its realisation in spring and summer 1980, he conceived and led the branch of this work in Ostrowina. He also took part in expeditions to Haiti (1979) and Mexico (1980). Since 1982 he has lived in Montreal, where, until 2010, he was artistic director of Theatre Prospero and the theatre company Le Groupe de la Veillée. There, he created various performance projects based on texts by Nijinsky, Dostoevsky, Balzac, Rilke, Céline, Knut Hamsun, and Gombrowicz, and staged plays by Strindberg, Kleist, Tankred Dorst, Per Olov Enquist, Dusan Kovacevic, and David Harrower.

The text is based on an interview held in Sopot on 25 November 2009, subsequently revised through email correspondence.

Grzegorz Ziółkowski: How did you find out about the Teatr Laboratorium? How did you get to know its work? And what were the circumstances of you joining this theatre permanently in 1967?

Teo Spychalski: In 1962 I began my studies in Polish literature and language at Toruń University, the same year Edward Csató – a prominent critic and writer from Warsaw – started guest lecturing there.[1] Surely it was a stroke of fate. He ran classes on dramatic analysis as well as Master's seminars. In those days in Poland it was a pioneering idea to create a specialisation in theatre, and later maybe even a separate university department of Theatre Studies. Csató was to be head of this department in Toruń, but, after his premature death from a heart attack on a train in April 1968, everything unravelled.

In winter 1965, I went to Wrocław with a fellow student, who was theatre-mad and spoke continually about this strange theatre in southern Poland in which actors threw benches and tables out among the audience. And so we spent three days in February in Wrocław shadowing rehearsals in Grotowski's theatre. There were high fences in the room and below there was a seminaked man struggling with the monologues of Prince Ferdinand (from *The Constant Prince* by Calderón/Słowacki). It must have been some kind of technical work: Ryszard Cieślak would often pause, trying to memorise the text and action.

Later, in 1966, when I had to decide on the subject of my Masters' thesis, I mentioned the Teatr 13 Rzędów (Theatre of the 13 Rows). Csató's reaction was instant and decisive: yes, absolutely! So off I went on the night train to Wrocław. When I appeared at the theatre in the Old Town Square, it turned out that Grotowski worked at night and slept during the day at a hotel. At 9am, I went to the hotel reception. A phone call to his room. Where was I phoning from? Downstairs. 'Come up', was the answer. He was sitting on the bed in

[1] On Edward Csató and his influence, see the interview with Stefania Gardecka, 'He Smelted Gold Out of People', elsewhere in this volume, pp. 141-49 (p. 143, n. 5). All footnotes in this text are by the editors.

Teo Spychalski during the 1960s.
Photographer unknown; courtesy of the author.

his pyjamas. The conversation lasted no more than two minutes. He agreed I could do my Master's thesis [on the company] on condition that I would become a full-time apprentice in his theatre while I wrote it. I was to return to the theatre in a fortnight and to bring gym shorts with me. A rather strange outfit for a literature student.

On my return to Toruń, Csató exulted even more and immediately arranged for me to be exempt from all my classes so I could go and stay in Wrocław. I went there at the end of November 1966, and so began a really interesting and crucial year for me. For unknown reasons, I became part of a group of foreign apprentices at the theatre (perhaps northern Poland meant 'abroad' to those Galician artists?).[2] Anyway, I joined a group with Elizabeth Albahaca, Sylvie Belai, and Serge Ouaknine.[3] In the mornings there were *plastique* exercises with Rena Mirecka and physical training under the guidance of the company's actors. And then rehearsals: for those days, an unconventional, amazing, and innovative approach to theatre work, to *Ewangelie* (The Gospels). I observed and described. But the object of study soon devoured the writer. What was happening in the theatre was so absorbing. I wrote at night while listening to the music from *Hair*, such as 'Good Morning Starshine', or to early Beatles songs – played through the night on Polish Radio. Enchanted, magical moments.

Ziółkowski: And what about your thesis?[4]

Spychalski: Normally such theses were typed out on a typewriter, in three or four copies. All of them disappeared, even the one from the University, and my copy was supposedly taken out of the theatre's archive in the old days. Only recently, in my family house in Gdańsk, did this rather candid (because youthful) work emerge from beneath piles of books and papers.

Ziółkowski: What were your duties when you were employed at the Teatr Laboratorium? You weren't an actor.

Spychalski: No, I wasn't an actor and I didn't really have aspirations in this direction. Yet one day, during this happy spring of 1967, I had a premonition that I probably wouldn't leave this place for some time. And in fact, not long afterwards, Ryszard Cieślak asked me on behalf of Grotowski about my future plans and whether I would consider staying with them. I stayed. In the beginning, I was still an ordinary apprentice and I even took part in some acting études, but it would be better to forget about this. And still I watched all the rehearsals.

Ziółkowski: The chronicles note that *Ewangelie* was presented only once, in a closed presentation on 20 March 1967.

Spychalski: *Ewangelie* was altered so much, it was almost mangled. Run-throughs took

[2] Galicia is a region encompassing much of south-east Poland, including Kraków, and what is now western Ukraine.

[3] See Serge Ouaknine, 'Théâtre Laboratoire de Wrocław. *Le Prince Constant*. Scénario et mise en scène par Jerzy Grotowski d'après l'adaptation par Juliusz Słowacki de la pièce de Calderon', *Les voies de la création théâtrale*, 1 (1970), 19-129.

[4] *Teatr Laboratorium. Założenia i realizacja* (Teatr Laboratorium: Some Premises and a Realisation), unpublished Master's thesis (Toruń: UMK, 1967).

place frequently and in lots of different versions. It was a complicated structure with many people in it. There are descriptions of numerous montages of the whole piece or its halves in my notes from that time. And one day, at last, it was to be gloriously accomplished, and a poster was made by Waldemar Krygier, which listed the multitude of actors.[5] And then suddenly the decision was made to abandon *Ewangelie*. It was not an easy step. Inevitably, it caused a crisis in the company, as well as in relations with those in power and with the artistic milieu, because it was inconceivable that a respectable theatre hadn't presented a new premiere for almost two years.

And then the process of 'cleaning' started – a real purge. Many people had to quit the theatre: almost all the Polish apprentices disappeared, and only Elizabeth Albahaca remained from the foreign group, becoming an important member of the main team. Grotowski probably realised that his plan of adding new people to the company hadn't worked. The disparity between the actors from the main group and the younger apprentices was perhaps so great that no matter how intense the exercises were, they could not bridge this gap. As for myself, surprisingly I was told that I was to stay. When I asked Grotowski what for, he replied that I'd be 'some kind of internal theatre researcher'.

At that time, Grotowski and I got to know each other better. I shared a flat with Zygmunt Molik. Grot often used to visit Molik after work at night and because I wasn't asleep, he came into my room and there was an opportunity to talk. At that time I was the youngest in the company. Grotowski probably didn't have much contact with the younger generation then, and so our night conversations began to grow longer. I felt

Production poster for *The Gospels* (1967), designed by Waldemar Krygier.

like a small window through which the already great and important artist was looking at the younger world. With his dark glasses and in his black coat he looked like a rabbi or a Hasidic Jew wandering around Wrocław at night, puzzling about what was happening in his theatre – and in Poland. He asked me many questions and listened carefully. And I listened to him too and learned a lot. It was already winter, going into the early spring of 1968. Not an easy time for our country.[6]

Of course, the idea of 'an internal theatre researcher' was utopian; during rehearsals, quiet and calm were required rather than the rustling of notes and papers. Besides, I don't think I had the right temperament for that. At the same time, I was to organise a kind of archive in the theatre. No great results with

[5] As detailed on the poster: Antoni Jahołkowski (Bedrock), Zbigniew Cynkutis or Zygmunt Molik (Lazarus), Stanisław Scierski (John), Maja Komorowska and Rena Mirecka (the two Mary Magdalenes), Sylvie Belai and Elizabeth Albahaca (The Girls), Ryszard Cieślak (The Beloved). Mieczysław Janowski and the following apprentices also took part: Ewa Benesz, Bernadette Landru, Czesław Wojtała, Andrzej Paluchiewicz, and Henryk Klamecki.

[6] In March 1968, Poland went through a severe political crisis initiated by student demonstrations in Warsaw, Gdańsk, Kraków, and Poznań (with students fighting for freedom of speech), which were brutally pacified by the *milicja* (the semi-militarised police). Among the victims of this unrest were Polish Jews, many of whom were abused, persecuted, and forced out of the country.

this either: someone or other would continually take away some cuttings or documents. Our Boss himself excelled in this, and then he would joke: 'Again, a victory for matter over spirit'.[7] I was also in charge of the foreign candidates who wanted to become apprentices – Grotowski needed somebody to relieve him of these duties, so I was useful in this respect. I even worked out a three-week method of teaching people how to speak rudimentary, but communicative Polish. Many of our former foreigners probably still speak this peculiar Polish 'dialect'.

Ziółkowski: What kept you attached to the Teatr Laboratorium?

Spychalski: Firstly, it was the atmosphere of intensity and the feeling of the essential importance of what was happening there. These people were searching with great concentration, in the quiet, in the calm, with an unusual focus and without unnecessary talking. The level and quality of presence were so high that sometimes it was almost hypnotising. For those who were there for only a brief period this could have been confusing; they would sometimes try to reproduce some of the external manifestations and expressions they'd seen in the Teatr Laboratorium work.

Secondly, it was because of the performance that was being presented then: *The Constant Prince*, which I saw many times. After witnessing something like that, it would be crazy not to want to stay with these people. Sometimes this performance made you shiver with emotion. It was the reaction of being faced with a fully accomplished, extreme work of art. Nothing sentimental – it was all existential and engraved in your body, brain, and tissue. At that time there was a strong emphasis on professionalism at the Teatr Laboratorium; amateurism was despised and any easy sentimentalism cursed. Later, there came *Akropolis* as well, because the decision was taken to revive this performance.[8] In a different way, it was a very deep, beautiful, and moving performance. And finally, there was the search for this new and difficult work *Ewangelie*, which later became *Apocalypsis cum Figuris*.

It needs to be said that each of these performances was very different, very distinct. Grotowski had this constant maxim (and it was addressed primarily to himself): 'Do not repeat yourself!' And another: 'No half-measures!' The rejection of both artistic repetition and the duplication of the company's achievements, along with the radicalism of all the projects that were undertaken – all this was fascinating. A very Romantic approach, which in the long-run also implied certain dangers.

Ziółkowski: So you observed the rehearsals for *Apocalypsis*...

Spychalski: Almost to the end. But during the last three weeks before the premiere, the tension within the company reached the stage when it was decided they would work without any observers. At last, the so-called 'premiere' came on 19 July 1968. The performance of this version was presented only once. I saw it. It was a piece born out of tiredness and torment, which still wasn't very legible and was almost lifeless – perhaps because of the fact that everyone was worn-out by the continuous rehearsals lasting many hours prior to the premiere. Members of the local government attended along with the chair of Wrocław City Council Bolesław Iwaszkiewicz, who was very supportive, and they were probably content that the theatre had at last shown a new performance.

Soon afterwards, the company went on a foreign tour (the Olympics in Mexico) and had time to gain some distance and to think things through.[9] As a result, further changes were introduced, even in the cast (only one Mary Magdalene was left, performed by Elizabeth Albahaca).[10] And over half a year

[7] Boss is an affectionate term for Grotowski used by his close collaborators. See Gardecka's and Mirecka's pieces in this collection for further comment on this. Eds.

[8] This was the fifth version of the performance, which premiered on 17 May 1967.

[9] The company also visited Edinburgh and France.

[10] After the performances in Munich at the Cultural Olympics (22 August to 4 September 1972), Rena

later, after the second and 'real' premiere on 11 February 1969, the performance was very different from before; it had as powerful an effect as *The Constant Prince*, though in a very different way. This version was fully accomplished, very vivid, and again it was theatrically revealing.

The performance then matured for a few years. It ripened. This was a good sign, a sign of its richness and its multiple levels, which were gradually being revealed. The process of self-discovery and self-enrichment continued. And later still, as is known, there were further changes to the performance, which were associated with entering the paratheatrical phase [of the company's work]. The benches were removed, the spectators were seated on the floor, and the white, soiled costumes were abandoned.[11] I missed these costumes because to my mind they were better than the supposedly 'personal' ones that were used later on. But the changes in fact had a more profound meaning. After 1970 and 1971, Grotowski significantly altered – or attempted to alter – *Apocalypsis*' existential perspective and consistency. He wanted to include an element of hope and some kind of acceptance, a lighter perspective in this work, which was initially bitter and consisted of a cruel – though accurate – view of our civilisation, an act built upon the impulse of rejection. He wanted this work not only to be the work of an *ending*, but also a *beginning*, a passage to a second stage, to a new life. Arcadia after the Apocalypse? This wasn't easy. There were no changes to the structure or text, at any level. A lot could be said about this. It was a bit like seasoning mustard with honey. It was related to the state of Grot's spirit as an artist and philosopher of life at that moment, so to speak. To the self-transformation he was undergoing then.

Apocalypsis was performed for a long time, with periods of ups and downs. There were various reasons for the long lifespan of the performance. Perhaps it was too long? But it's a pity there is no well-made film recording of this performance.[12]

Ziółkowski: Let's go to the beginnings of paratheatre, when the farm was bought in Brzezinka and when you were refurbishing it. I'm also curious about when Ostrowina appeared.[13]

Spychalski: In autumn 1969, the theatre at last went to the United States, on a very successful tour.[14] During that period, I had the task of finding new people in Poland. So, I travelled to cities and met various theatre groups. But when the company came back from the USA it appeared that Grotowski needed something different already. What he and his actors had encountered in the United States had made a great impression on them; it became clear that the searching should be done in other areas, in the potential Polish sub- or counter-culture, rather than among actors.

So the work of a new phase of recruitment began. We decided to use the media, the press, the radio, the TV; we were modern! A rather

Mirecka joined the cast, substituting for Elizabeth Albahaca who was expecting a baby. The production reopened with Mirecka on 23 October 1973. From the tour in Australia (26 March to 11 June 1974), the two actors performed the role of Mary Magdalene on different nights.

[11] The white costumes for the first version were designed by Waldemar Krygier. The second version, without benches and with actors in 'personal' clothing, was addressed to a younger audience. It opened in June 1971. For some time, however, the production was performed both with and without the benches, as in Munich in 1972.

[12] Grotowski planned to film the performance and invited the distinguished Polish filmmaker Andrzej Wajda to do so. Wajda was keen but their schedules never met. See Zbigniew Osiński 'Niezrealizowane projekty filmowe Andrzeja Wajdy o Teatrze Laboratorium. Korespondencja Wajdy ze Zbigniewem Cynkutisem i Jerzym Grotowskim z lat 1963–1964, 1970–1972 i 1975–1979' (Andrzej Wajda's unrealised film projects on the Teatr Laboratorium: Wajda's correspondence with Zbigniew Cynkutis and Jerzy Grotowski from the years 1963-64, 1970-72, and 1975-79), *Pamiętnik Teatralny*, 3-4 (2003), 235-63. In the end the Italian film director, Ermanno Olmi, was invited to document the performance. It was filmed in a television studio in Milan, without an audience, in 1979. The film was produced by the Italian television company RAI.

[13] On Brzezinka and Ostrowina see 'Introduction: Voices from Within', elsewhere in this volume, pp. 8-15 (p. 13, n. 14).

[14] The theatre had been refused permission to enter the USA in 1968 because of the invasion of Czechoslovakia by the Warsaw Pact countries.

cryptic message was formulated so that the authorities wouldn't be suspicious about its subversive nature, but also to make sure that those to whom it was addressed could easily catch our drift. From the hundreds of letters we chose a few dozen candidates and invited them to Wrocław in November 1970. And there was a very noisy one-day meeting, during which Grot chose about ten people. This new group became known as the *młodziaki* (youngsters), and the directive was to avoid putting them in touch with the old group in order to 'prevent them from being contaminated' – as Grotowski 'elegantly' phrased it then. This worked for a while.

These young people played instruments, sang, moved, and danced – all of it was as lovely and as nice as it was naïve, but no matter. Grot was getting to know them; he observed them and immersed himself in their youthfulness. From that first group of ten, only a few people remained,[15] as well as Włodek [Włodzimierz] Staniewski who joined the group after he was discovered elsewhere.[16] Grotowski later added some members from the old company and prepared [the event] 'Holiday' [*Święto*].[17] This group – along with me, who was in between these two generations – set out to clean the proverbial stable and pigsty by clearing out the rubble in Brzezinka. Later on, I ran a month-long work session with them and the next stage of selection followed – a slightly phoney one, because I was aware in advance who Grotowski was interested in. And after this session, which was in fact my first paratheatrical work, our Boss told me that from now on I would be working alone with the foreigners. This was soon named the 'International Studio'. In these activities, water, earth, fire, hay, and stones appeared – all the paraphernalia of that time. Grotowski gave me a lot of freedom. Of course, we spoke and from time to time he would come along, observe, and comment on the work – usually concluding that there was too much 'theatre' in it. He suspected himself of the same thing, and this was one of the reasons why he didn't continue with *Święto*.

Finally, two kilometres from Brzezinka in Ostrowina, there was a small, empty, foresters' lodge with a cowshed which was allocated for the use of my foreign group. We prepared a workplace there and it gradually became a parallel site to Brzezinka. Three months later the activities of *The University of Research of the Theatre of Nations* [*Uniwersytet Poszukiwań Teatru Narodów*] took place, also in Ostrowina.[18] My foreign group and I organised actions in which the participants of the University would arrive by train at a village far from our place and walk for about half a day through the woods to Ostrowina. There would be many paratheatrical surprises and meanderings on the way. Such were the Grotowskian people's games and pursuits in those days.

Ziółkowski: Throughout the whole paratheatrical period, Grotowski's and your own work developed simultaneously, alongside

[15] These were Irena Rycyk, Wiesław Hoszowski, Zbigniew Kozłowski, and Aleksander Lidtke.

[16] Staniewski was chosen after Grotowski saw his performance work with the Teatr STU, an alternative student theatre group in Kraków where he was an actor. Staniewski later left the Laboratorium and founded Gardzienice Theatre Association in 1977. For more on Staniewski see Irena Rycyk Brill, 'I Had Four Fathers', elsewhere in this volume, pp. 106-19 (p. 110–11, n. 24 and 25).

[17] Święto was the first name of a paratheatrical event later called *Grotowski Special Project* or *Narrow Special Project* (to differentiate them from *Large Special Projects* or *Special Projects* led by Ryszard Cieślak). The first *Święto* was carried out in June 1973 in Brzezinka and included Elizabeth Albahaca, Jerzy Bogajewicz, Ryszard Cieślak, Jerzy Grotowski, Wiesław Hoszowski, Antoni Jahołkowski, Zbigniew Kozłowski, Aleksander Lidtke, Zygmunt Molik, Teresa Nawrot, Andrzej Paluchiewicz, Irena Rycyk, Stanisław Scierski, and Włodzimierz Staniewski. See Zbigniew Osiński, 'Występy gościnne Teatru Laboratorium, 1959-1984. Kronika działalności 1978-1984' (Touring Performances of the Teatr Laboratorium, 1959-1984. A Chronicle of Activities 1978-1984), *Pamiętnik Teatralny*, 1-4 (2000), 627-90 (p. 643). The text titled 'Holiday', which corresponds to this period of Grotowski's work, was based on his public talk at New York University on 13 December 1970, prepared for print by him in collaboration with Ludwik Flaszen and Spychalski, and published first in Polish by *Odra* (June 1972) and then in English.

[18] Between 21 June and 6 July 1975, Spychalski ran a series of paratheatrical 'actions' in Ostrowina entitled *Song of Myself*, in which 62 people took part. See Zbigniew Osiński, *Grotowski i jego Laboratorium* (Warsaw: Państwowy Instytut Wydawniczy, 1980), p. 375.

one another. How did you know what you were supposed to do?

Spychalski: Did I know? Or did he know? If I knew, I knew it in my bones, through induction. Of course we had contact with each other and he was probably pleased that what we did somehow functioned, that people were eager to come in large numbers and take part in what we called 'active culture', and that it gave them something. And this lightened Grotowski's load. Yes, it happened through induction. He imposed nothing. It was like rubbing against each other at a distance. And guessing. He called out the wolves and other animals from the woods – his famous 'challenges' – and we were to chase and tame them. This was what our collaboration looked like in those days – but also later on.

So, I ran something like a separate institution within the institution; it was independent from other activities and I could realise my ideas freely. This evolved, and later they melted together into Theatre of Sources. Grotowski took from everyone whatever he needed. He drew on everything: fragments of conversations, allusions, and observations.

Ziółkowski: You said in Kraków during the Solitude of Theatre conference [in 2009][19] that the series of work sessions at the French abbey La Tenaille in Saintes in summer 1976 was a turning point for you.[20]

Spychalski: It was indeed the beginning of a fruitful time. Paratheatre had already revealed all its limits and mirages: its excessive playfulness, the general *getting together* and fraternisation, the burnout of energies. At Abbaye de la Tenaille – along with Maro Shimoda from Japan, my friend and fellow collaborator since 1974, and with François Liège from France, who subsequently joined us there – we started to discover new possibilities based on a specific understanding of presence and movement, on a kind of non-habitual spontaneity. It raised questions, or rather gave answers: how was movement being born in us and from outside of us, beyond the intervention of our usual 'controlling willpower'? What was its *yeast*, its raising agent? From what level of our attention did movement emerge? How did movement grow out of a spiral of 'arousal' and renunciation? Movement that opposes itself but that yields, still at the beginning, *in status nascendi*. No emotions, no sentiments, no illusions in it, only the gradual rising of a crystal lucidity. It is comparable, in a way, to *perpetuum mobile*: never-ending movement, where the flow of time is altered. No fatigue, no refusal. All this was opposed to the previous paratheatrical habits.

Grotowski appeared at night like a spirit among the participants and observed, listening deeply with his ears, eyes, and skin. Many things came out of this experience. Some months later there was a reading of *The Gospel of Thomas* and a 'cross-fertilisation' with the explosive words contained within it.[21]

Ziółkowski: In spring 1977, Grotowski handed to you and asked you to read a French edition of this apocryphal gospel.

Spychalski: This text made a big impression on me then. It revealed so much and in some particular aspects reaffirmed our path. Wanting to understand it better, I quickly translated it into Polish. I read that French version of the text for the first time in silence on the carpet in Grotowski's flat on Kościuszko Street in Wrocław, under his vigilant watch. There were no chairs or tables, just this little

[19] On 27 March 2009 in Kraków, during the conference 'Grotowski: samotność teatru. Dokumenty, konteksty, interpretacje' (Grotowski: the Solitude of Theatre. Documents, Contexts, Interpretations), a meeting devoted to Theatre of Sources took place at the Państwowa Wyższa Szkoła Teatralna im. Ludwika Solskiego (Ludwik Solski State Higher Theatre School). Renata M. Molinari, Jairo Cuesta, Pierre Guicheney, François Liège, and Spychalski took part in a discussion led by Leszek Kolankiewicz.

[20] The project at La Tenaille was one of the largest and most sustained actions in this period of the company's work. See Osiński, *Grotowski i jego Laboratorium*, p. 377.

[21] According to Leszek Kolankiewicz, Grotowski became interested in *The Gospel of Thomas* after reading the opening quotation, its 22nd logion, in R.D. Laing's *The Bird of Paradise*, fragments of which were published in Polish translation in *Literatura na Świecie* (Literature in the World), 11 (1976). Grotowski then explored this apocryphal gospel and included fragments of it in his work in Theatre of Sources, Objective Drama, and Art as vehicle.

carpet on which Grotowski exercised. There was also a gramophone on which he listened to what was quite strange music for him, by Marek Grechuta,[22] Maryla Rodowicz,[23] Zhanna Bichevskaya,[24] and George Harrison. It seems he was impregnating himself with the pop culture of those times.

Ziółkowski: In late autumn 1977 you met each other in the United States.

Spychalski: I was in Oregon and Grotowski arrived there from Haiti.[25] He was fascinated by that place and by its tradition. It was as if he had jumped headfirst into a big new river and the raging current was carrying him away. With great respect, but greedily nonetheless, he fed himself with this experience. It deepened and made more precise his notion of 'sources', and its connection with a specific new understanding of the theatre.

His fascination with Carlos Castaneda's literary visions came even earlier. From Oregon we went together to San Francisco, and in Berkeley Grotowski made me contact various people, professors and anthropologists (as his English wasn't good enough then, especially on the phone). But he never admitted that it was all about meeting with Castaneda. All those phone calls seemed like hunting for somebody in hiding or who didn't even exist (by the way, we seriously suspected Castaneda of this). In the end, I never knew whether Grot met him or not. If so, they probably took a pact of silence and nobody will ever know. *The Gospel of Thomas*, the meeting with the Saint-Soleil group in Haiti, and Castaneda's shamanic fantasies, which Grotowski actually made fun of, saying 'This is all very improbable, but still completely true' – were the foundations of this new undertaking.[26]

Ziółkowski: What were the origins of the Motions exercise and other Theatre of Sources activities?[27]

Spychalski: Once, when I was with them in the Brzezinka group, I started talking about my last two years of activities in Ostrowina and I mentioned that I'd elaborated a series of exercises – a vague mixture of some yoga, tai chi, and some personal imaginings about the attentive quality of birds – which I unpretentiously called 'Movements' [*Ruchy*]. Grotowski immediately ordered me to introduce the whole Brzezinka group to them, without even checking what these exercises were like. Only later on, during an expedition to Mexico in 1980, did he ask François Kahn to show them to him.[28] Our contact

---

[22] Marek Grechuta (1945-2006) was a very popular Polish songwriter, singer, composer, and lyricist.

[23] Maryla Rodowicz (b. 1945) is a popular Polish singer.

[24] Zhanna Bichevskaya (b. 1944) is a Russian composer and folk singer, best known for her interpretations of Russian ballads.

[25] Grotowski went to Haiti for the first time on his own at the end of 1977. He later visited the country several times.

[26] Saint-Soleil was a Haitian artistic community founded by Maud Robart and Jean-Claude Garoute (Tiga) in Saisson-la-Montagne near Port-au-Prince in 1974. The leaders encouraged rural communities to express themselves, mainly through painting. The group and its work, inspired by *vodou*, became famous when André Malraux wrote enthusiastically about them in *L'intemporel*, the third volume of his *La métamorphose des dieux* (1976), after visiting the community in 1975. The group disbanded after several years, but its primitivist style of painting continues. Grotowski most probably found out about the group from Jean-Marie Drot, a French filmmaker who collaborated with Malraux on the documentary *Le dernier voyage. Saint-Soleil en Haïti* (transmission on French TV on 2 May 1978), and made two films on Grotowski: *Jerzy Grotowski et son Théâtre Laboratoire de Wroclaw. Grotowski ou... Socrate est-il Polonais?* (1967), and *Jerzy Grotowski, ou... Socrate est-il Polonais?* (1977).

[27] On the Motions, see I Wayan Lendra, 'Bali and Grotowski: Some parallels in the training process', in *The Grotowski Sourcebook*, ed. by Lisa Wolford and Richard Schechner (London and New York: Routledge, 2001), pp. 310-25, and Thomas Richards, *At Work with Grotowski on Physical Actions* (London and New York: Routledge, 1995), pp. 52-55.

[28] From 1-29 January 1980, Grotowski and a team of seven people (Jairo Cuesta, Dominique Gérard, Elizabeth Havard, François Kahn, Zbigniew Kozłowski, Teo Spychalski, and Jacek Zmysłowski) visited Mexico thanks to an invitation from Universidad Naciónal Autónoma de México, where Grotowski had been previously in 1976. He was interested in Huichol culture and inspired by Barbara G. Myerhoff's *Peyote Hunt: The Sacred Journey of the Huichol Indians* (New York: Cornell University Press, 1976). On the expedition to Mexico see Nicolás Núñez, *Anthropocosmic Theatre: Rite in the Dynamics of Theatre*, trans. by Ronan J. Fitzsimons, ed. and with a foreword by Deborah Middleton (Amsterdam: Harwood Academic Publishers, 1996).

with the Huichols had been unsuccessful, so we had to fill the time somehow. From then on, these 'Movements' started functioning in two different versions. During the open phase of Theatre of Sources they were done in both 'Ostrowina' and 'Brzezinka' versions. Then my original (maybe primitive?) branch of this activity vanished, just as our 'neanderthal ancestors' gave life to a more sophisticated and more *homo sapiens-like*, version, inclined towards the sacred: Motions.

In fact, Grotowski never saw me doing my Movements. He took on this exercise through a third person.

Ziółkowski: Among the Theatre of Sources expeditions, the one to Haiti in summer 1979 seems particularly important.[29] Grotowski had experienced something there during his previous visit that had been exceptionally inspiring and essential for him.

Spychalski: Certainly. He took us there as though on a journey to Mecca. Everything was well organised, unlike with the trip to Mexico. We met the Saint-Soleil group at their premises in Saisson-la-Montagne, near Port-au-Prince. We also went north to see Eliezar Cadet, a very unorthodox *vodou* priest. But it must be emphasised that just as Mexico wasn't about experimenting with peyote, the Haiti expedition wasn't about experiencing being possessed. Besides, Saint-Soleil wasn't a religious *vodou* group; they practised a different kind of group movement connected to singing, which later – in 1980 – they cultivated daily over several months in Brzezinka. Before leaving for Haiti in summer 1979, Grotowski chose fragments from *The Gospel of Thomas* and gave one to each of us, asking us to create our own melody for it. It was to be our gift to the Haitians as a thank you for their singing and movements, because we did not have any activities of our own to share at that time.

Ziółkowski: During the conference in Kraków in March 2009, you said that Theatre of Sources had a 'concentric structure', with the work of the Haitians at its centre.

Spychalski: There were many activities in Theatre of Sources – some similar to what we'd done before in Ostrowina. Others were inspired by Castaneda's books (hanging from trees, slow walking etc.). Apart from Movements, I proposed a circling, marching-dance in a regular rhythm that was kept by somebody playing on a tree stump placed at the centre of the circle – this was reminiscent of what I'd seen in 1977, among the indigenous Canadians in a reservation on the island of Manitoulin. But there was also quite a bit of casualness around this work and some activities were created quite randomly, without a sufficiently solid foundation. All these were the outer circles of work that surrounded the group of Haitians with Maud Robart and Tiga, which was so crucial for Grotowski.[30] Without a doubt, Maud Robart's participation had a fundamental meaning for him. Without her, what followed later wouldn't have been possible. As we know, the Haitian songs and the Motions remained essential elements of Grotowski's later work.

Ziółkowski: At some point the idea of creating a branch of the Teatr Laboratorium in Gdańsk cropped up. Where did this come from?

Spychalski: This was by no means Grotowski's first attempt somehow to disconnect himself from his institution – from his Institute, his Teatr Laboratorium, which was so strongly connected to him. It may be difficult to imagine this today, but earlier on he had already tried to liberate himself from his theatre. This fantasy tormented him, if not all the time then

[29] 18 July to 8 August 1979.

[30] Maud Robart (b. 1946) is an artist and teacher whose work is based on her direct experience of Haitian traditional practices. On her work, see sources in Italian: a special issue of *Biblioteca Teatrale*, 77 (2006) and a special section in *Culture Teatrali*, 5 (2001), 69-100. Tiga (Jean-Claude Garoute, 1935-2006), was an outstanding Haitian artist: a painter, sculptor, potter, pedagogue, and founder of several artistic groups, such as Poto Mitan (1968), Poisson Soleil (1972), Saint Soleil (with Robart, 1974), and L'Oeil du Soleil (1989). He also directed, choreographed, sang, wrote poetry, and designed fashion. Grotowski collaborated with Robart and Tiga in the late 1970s and early 1980s in Theatre of Sources and Objective Drama; and with Robart in Pontedera on Art as vehicle, from September 1987 until the end of 1993.

at least occasionally, for sure. The desire to distance himself, to go on a journey, the dream of a new beginning. The syndrome of a patriarch leaving his family, his clan? It was impulsive and it returned in waves. Who wouldn't be familiar with this…? At the same time, in his situation it was completely unrealistic, unfeasible. The first case of this that I am aware of occurred in 1969, when Grotowski wanted to pass on the theatre, or the main part of it, to a young theatre director, who refused however. But those were the old days.

Then at some point in spring 1976 he surprised me greatly by announcing that he was planning to hand over the direction of his whole institution to one of us: either to me or to Jacek Zmysłowski, and he asked me what I thought about it. I told him that in my opinion, for many reasons, it should be Jacek. Probably this decision determined who would do *Mountain Project* in 1977. Jacek led this and I went on my first long American journey. Yet for various reasons, the theatre wasn't passed on to anyone. Grot had something else on his mind then – he was already thinking about Haiti and Theatre of Sources.

A bit later this idea returned in a different version – as a branch of the theatre in Gdańsk under Jacek's and my leadership. This was to happen after 1980, after Theatre of Sources. Although the idea of sending us on an internal emigration had probably already come up in 1978. The theatre led a series of activities in Gdańsk: Jacek ran *The Vigils* [*Czuwania*] at the Pałac Opatów (Abbots' Palace) in Gdańsk Oliwa, I made my own work, and there were some activities in the forests in Kaszuby.[31] This was at the same time as Grotowski announced the opening of Theatre of Sources at the seminar 'Art of the Beginner' [*Sztuka debiutanta*] in Warsaw.[32] Later on, *Apocalypsis* was presented at Gdańsk's Muzeum Narodowe (National Museum). In addition, I had a friend from my schooldays who was the manager of the Gdańsk Council's Culture Department, so I contacted him. I even looked at a few places in and around the city. But I wasn't keen to move back to my childhood landscapes, so I only agreed to help organise it for a year or two. But Jacek's personal fate, his illness, as well as the fate of our theatre and our country, altered our plans. And finally, by the same twist of fate, it so happened that it was not one of us young ones, but Ludwik Flaszen, the oldest member and co-founder of the Teatr Laboratorium, who ran the company in the final stage of its existence.[33]

Ziółkowski: At the same time as Theatre of Sources, you took part in *Tree of People*.

Spychalski: At various stages, Grotowski had the 'strategic' need to organise mass events that functioned alongside our more specific research. These projects often had English titles, which were sometimes meaningful, sometimes strange or provocatively hollow: *The University of Research*, *Special Project*, *Active Culture*, *Openings*, *Mountain Project*. They were, among other things, to prove that we weren't exclusive, that we were open and made our theatre accessible to people. They were also to prove that we had some developed techniques that could be passed on further. And people came from around the world. *Tree of People* was the last of these mass events. Even the theatre's older members were invited into this project, which in fact had the character of paratheatre once again, with many of the associated traps. It quickly became an ordeal. Of course, some pleasant moments did occur in the end, mainly after a so-called 'second wind' and after crossing the threshold of energetic exhaustion. Some members escaped from the project under any old pretext. Well, it's not a pretty image, but in order to think and talk openly about our great, long-term adventure, we shouldn't close our eyes to its downside and to its traps.

Ziółkowski: Theatre of Sources continued to exist through 1981 and 1982.

[31] Kaszuby is a province in north Poland, southwest of Gdańsk.

[32] The symposium took place in Warsaw and in Grzegorzewice, from 4-7 June 1978. See Jerzy Grotowski, 'Art of the beginner', *International Theatre Information* (spring/summer 1978), 7-11.

[33] See also Rycyk-Brill's piece in this collection for further information on this. Flaszen took over in 1980.

Spychalski: Without me. Soon after the summer 1980 [stage of] Theatre of Sources, I went with my family on a three-month trip to Venezuela that we'd planned. I went by cargo ship from Gdynia to Caracas, and then I was going to return to Poland via Montreal. I could never have imagined emigrating! I had a return ticket for the flight from Montreal that I didn't use in the end. But for sure, over the middle of the Atlantic I thought affectionately about Witold Gombrowicz, who left Poland for Argentina by cargo ship just before the Second World War, planning to come back three weeks later – and who never returned.

Grotowski started sending us messages and discouraged us from returning. He feared there would be a tragic denouement to the political situation. At the same time, in December 1980, he asked me to go to New York to join Jacek Zmysłowski, whose health was deteriorating. For the whole of 1981, I organised workshops with Jacek, in order to raise money for his treatment and to keep him busy. Then, that fatal winter arrived… When I was just about to go back to Poland via Montreal, I learned on the Canadian border what had happened in Poland on 13 December.[34] Again the wheel of fate turned and prompted me to begin a second life, which has in fact lasted longer than the first one in the Teatr Laboratorium.

Ziółkowski: From the end of 1982, Grotowski stayed in the United States while you lived in Canada. Were you in touch? Didn't you talk about continuing the collaboration?

Spychalski: Everything was vague and uncertain in those days. Before Martial Law, I met Grotowski once in Montreal in 1981, and he said in passing that he would like me to travel around the world on his behalf, meeting people with whom he could work in a secluded place somewhere. A bit afraid of this prospect, I gasped and muttered that maybe I'd had enough travelling. This idea was similar to that of the 'internal theatre researcher' or the 'branch in Gdańsk'. Besides, everything was falling down around us, and every three days or so all our plans and ideas had to be altered. Eventually the Teatr Laboratorium ceased to exist. And I found myself over there, on the other side of this 'big pond' where for some years I continued various activities similar to ours in the Laboratorium, with friends from Le Groupe de la Veillée founded by Gabriel Arcand ten years before.[35] At the same time I started creating theatre performances and humbly directing and training performers in acting workshops.

Ziółkowski: You worked at the Teatr Laboratorium for almost fifteen years.

Spychalski: You call it work… It was a 'long and winding road'. At each turn of this laborious and magical journey, like in an ancient fairytale, we ran or sometimes dragged ourselves along behind our rowdy and idealistic 'Robin Hood', who would shout either beautiful or strange commands at us, and who would occasionally rage and scream: 'I won't wait for you!', 'Don't repeat yourself!', 'Let's go into the unknown!'. He would sometimes give orders whose meaning wasn't easy to decipher, so we had to keep on guessing. Various curious travellers, visitors from around the world, would appear and join us in this cortege. They would come along and then disappear. We had to face various 'tasks' and 'challenges', which, like strange unknown creatures, would emerge from the dark forest and you couldn't be sure whether they were laughing or wanted to devour you. That is to say, you had to invest yourself in it totally. It wasn't a dream or an illusion but sharpened lucidity. This was the landscape in which we followed the one who 'cometh leaping upon the mountains, skipping upon the hills', as King Solomon describes the 'beloved' in the Song of Songs. And truly he was, in his own very particular way, a great lover of life.

TRANSLATED BY JUSTYNA DROBNIK-ROGERS

[34] On 13 December 1981, the head of the military government General Wojciech Jaruzelski declared Martial Law, which lasted until 22 July 1983.

[35] Gabriel Arcand worked with Spychalski in Poland in 1973 and 1975, first in Spychalski's group of stagiaires and then within the University of Nations programme. For further details on Le Groupe de la Veillée, see <http://www.laveillee.qc.ca>.

Selected Bibliography of Sources in English

Entries are listed in chronological order

COMPILED BY GRZEGORZ ZIÓŁKOWSKI

1. KUSTOW, Michael, '*Ludens Mysterium Tremendum et Fascinosum*', *Encore* (1963), 9-14
2. *Tulane Drama Review*, 9.3 (1965)
3. BROOK, Peter, *The Empty Space* (London: McGibbon and Kee; New York: Atheneum, 1968), pp. 59-60
4. FLASZEN, Ludwik, 'Après l'avant-garde'/ 'After the Avant-Garde', *Le Théâtre en Pologne/The Theatre in Poland*, 7-8 (1968), 11-17
5. GROTOWSKI, Jerzy, *Towards a Poor Theatre*, ed. by Eugenio Barba (Holstebro: Odin Teatrets Forlag, 1968)
6. *Drama: The Quarterly Theatre Review*, 95 (1969)
7. SMITH, Michael, *Theatre Trip*, intro. by Judith Malina and Julian Beck (Indianapolis and New York: Bobbs-Merrill Company, 1969), pp. 52-72 and 82-88
8. 'Notes From the Temple: A Grotowski Seminar', an interview with Margaret Croyden by Erika Munk and Bill Coco, *The Drama Review*, 14.1 (1969), 178-83
9. *The Drama Review*, 14.2 (1970)
10. TEMKINE, Raymonde, *Grotowski*, trans. by Alex Szogyi (New York: Discus Books published by Avon, 1972)
11. 'Grotowski: The Purest Theatre', in James Schevill, *Break Out: In Search of New Theatrical Environments* (Chicago: The Swallow Press, 1973), pp. 276-93
12. *The Drama Review*, 17.2 (1973)
13. CROYDEN, Margaret, 'The Phenomenon of Jerzy Grotowski', in Croyden, *Lunatics, Lovers and Poets: The Contemporary Experimental Theatre* (New York, St. Louis, San Francisco, Toronto: McGraw-Hill, 1974), pp. 135-68
14. MENNEN, Richard, 'Grotowski's Paratheatrical Projects', *The Drama Review*, 19.4 (1975), 58-69
15. GIERACZYŃSKI, Bogdan, 'No Play-Acting: An Interview with Ryszard Cieślak', *Canadian Theatre Review*, 14 (1977), 94-100
16. FORSYTHE, Eric, 'Conversations with Ludwik Flaszen', *Educational Theatre Journal*, 30.3 (1978), 301-28
17. KUMIEGA, Jennifer, 'Grotowski/The Mountain Project', *Dartington Theatre Papers*, 2.9 (Dartington: Dartington Hall, 1978)
18. *On the Road to Active Culture*: *The Activities of Grotowski's Theatre Laboratory Institute in the Years 1970–1977*, ed. by Leszek Kolankiewicz, trans. by Bolesław Taborski (Wrocław: Instytut Aktora – Teatr Laboratorium, 1978; 1979)
19. RONEN, Dan, 'A Workshop with Ryszard Cieślak', *TDR: The Drama Review*, 22.4 (1978), 67-76
20. BŁOŃSKI, Jan, 'Holiday or Holiness?: A Critical Reevaluation of Grotowski', trans. by Bolesław Taborski, in *Twentieth Century Polish Theatre*, ed. by Bohdan Drozdowski, trans. by Catherine Itzen, published in collaboration with *Gambit International Review* (London: John Calder; Dallas: Riverrun Press, 1979), pp. 67-76
21. BURZYŃSKI, Tadeusz, and Zbigniew Osiński, *Grotowski's Laboratory*, trans. by Bolesław Taborski (Warsaw: Interpress, 1979)
22. FINDLAY, Robert, 'Grotowski's "Cultural Explorations Bordering on Art, Especially Theatre"', *Theatre Journal*, 32.3 (1980), 349-56
23. KOTT, Jan, 'After Grotowski: The End of the Impossible Theater', trans. by Krystyna Bittenek, *Theatre Quarterly*, 10 (1980), 27-37; reprinted in Kott, *The Theater of Essence* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1984)

24. WILES, Timothy J., *The Theater Event: Modern Theories of Performance* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980), pp. 111-78
25. GREGORY, André, and Wallace Shawn, *My Dinner with André*, a script and VHS film (New York: Grove Press, 1981; DVD release 2009)
26. INNES, Christopher, *Holy Theatre: Ritual and the Avant Garde* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1981), pp. 159-77. See also: Christopher, Innes, *Avant Garde Theatre, 1892–1992* (London and New York: Routledge, 1993), pp. 149–62 and 162–66
27. KUMIEGA, Jennifer, 'Grotowski's Laboratory Theatre', in *The Director and the Stage: from Naturalism to Grotowski*, ed. by Edward Braun (London: Methuen, 1982; New York: Holmes and Meyer, 1982), pp. 191-200
28. TURNER, Victor, *From Ritual to Theatre: The Human Seriousness of Play* (New York: PAJ Publications, 1982), pp. 116-20
29. FINDLAY, Robert, 'Grotowski's *Akropolis*: A Retrospective View', *Modern Drama*, 27.1 (1984), 1-20
30. FOWLER, Richard, 'The Four Theatres of Jerzy Grotowski: An Introductory Assessment', *New Theatre Quarterly*, 1.2 (1985), 173-78
31. FURLONG, Gary, and James Harrison, 'In Search of Impulse: Zygmunt Molik and the Polish Theatre Lab', *Theatrum: A Theatre Journal*, (1985), 11-31
32. KUMIEGA, Jennifer, *The Theatre of Grotowski* (London: Methuen, 1985)
33. SCHECHNER, Richard, *Between Theater and Anthropology*, foreword by Victor Turner (Philadelphia: University of Philadelphia Press, 1985), pp. 213-60
34. OSIŃSKI, Zbigniew, *Grotowski and His Laboratory*, trans. and abridged by Lillian Vallee and Robert Findlay (New York: PAJ Publications, 1986)
35. *TDR: The Drama Review*, 30.3 (1986)
36. FINDLAY, Robert, 'Practice/Theory/Practice/Theory: Excerpts from an Extended Interview/Dialogue with Zbigniew Cynkutis (1938–1987)', *Journal of Dramatic Theory and Criticism*, 1.2 (1987), 145-50
37. PUZYNA, Konstanty, 'Grotowski and Polish Romantic Drama', trans. by Jacob Conrad, *Theatre Three*, 4 (1988), 45-50
38. *Workcenter of Jerzy Grotowski* (Pontedera: Centro per Sperimentazione e la Ricerca Teatrale, 1988)
39. GROTOWSKI, Jerzy, 'Around Theatre: The Orient – The Occident', trans. by Maureen Schaeffer Price, *Asian Theatre Journal*, 6 (1989), 1-11; reprinted in *The Intercultural Performance Reader*, ed. by Patrice Pavis (London and New York: Routledge, 1996), pp. 231-41
40. BHARUCHA, Rustom, *Theatre and the World: Performance and the Politics of Culture* (Manohar Publications, 1990; London and New York: Routledge, 1993), pp. 42-53
41. ALEXANDER, Bobby C., *Victor Turner Revisited: Ritual as Social Change* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1991), pp. 105-48
42. GROTOWSKI, Jerzy, 'Pragmatic Laws', in Eugenio Barba and Nicola Savarese, *The Secret Art of the Performer: A Dictionary of Theatre Anthropology*, published for the Centre for Performance Research (London and New York: Routledge, 1991; expanded edn. 2005), pp. 236-37
43. *TDR: The Drama Review*, 35.1 (1991)
44. 'Running to Touch the Horizon', an interview with Ryszard Cieślak by Marzena Torzecka, trans. by Susan Bassnett, *New Theatre Quarterly*, 8 (1992), 261-63
45. CROYDEN, Margaret, *In the Shadow of the Flame: Three Journeys* (New York: Continuum, 1993), pp. 3-70
46. SCHECHNER, Richard, *Future of Ritual: Writings on Culture and Performance* (London and New York: Routledge, 1993), pp. 228-65
47. CYNKUTIS, Zbigniew, 'To Be or To Have', trans. and ed. by William H. Shephard, *TDR: The Drama Review*, 38.3 (1994), 50-56
48. REPOHL, Roger, 'Liturgy as vehicle', *America*, 24 (1994), 18-20
49. RICHARDS, Thomas, *At Work with Grotowski on Physical Actions* (London and New York: Routledge, 1995)
50. WOLFORD, Lisa, 'Approaching Grotowski's Work-Without-Witness', *Slavic and East European Performance*, 15.3 (1995), 16-25

51. BANU, Georges, 'Grotowski – the Absent Presence', trans. by Susan Basnett, in *The Intercultural Performance Reader*, ed. by Patrice Pavis (London and New York: Routledge, 1996), pp. 247-56
52. GROTOWSKI, Jerzy, 'A Kind of Volcano', trans. from French by Magda Złotowska, in *Gurdjieff: Essays and Reflections on the Man and His Teaching*, ed. by Jacob Needleman and George Baker (New York: Continuum, 1996), pp. 87-106
53. NÚÑEZ, Nicolás, *Anthropocosmic Theatre: Rite in the Dynamics of Theatre*, trans. by Ronan J. Fitzsimons, ed. and with a fore-word by Deborah Middleton (Amsterdam: Harwood Academic Publishers, 1996), pp. 51-64
54. RICHARDS, Thomas, *The Edge-Point of Performance*, interviewed by Lisa Wolford (Pontedera: Documentation Series of the Workcenter of Jerzy Grotowski, 1996)
55. WOLFORD, Lisa, *Grotowski's Objective Drama Research*, foreword by Robert Findlay (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 1996)
56. WOLFORD, Lisa, 'The Occupation of the Saint: Grotowski's Art as Vehicle' (unpublished doctoral dissertation, Northwestern University, 1996)
57. KUHARSKI, Allen J., 'Jerzy Grotowski's First Lecture at the College de France', *Slavic and East European Performance*, 17.2 (1997), 16-20; reprinted in *Periphery: Journal of Polish Affairs*, 3.1-2 (1997)
58. WOLFORD, Lisa, and Richard Schechner, eds, *The Grotowski Sourcebook*, (London and New York: Routledge, 1997; 2nd edn 2001)
59. WOLFORD, Lisa, 'Grotowski's Art as Vehicle: the Invention of an Esoteric Tradition', *Performance Research*, 3.3 (1998), 85-95
60. *American Theatre*, 16.4 (1999)
61. BARBA, Eugenio, *Land of Ashes and Diamonds: My Apprenticeship in Poland, followed by 26 letters from Jerzy Grotowski to Eugenio Barba*, trans. by Judy Barba (Aberystwyth: Black Mountain Press, 1999)
62. GROTOWSKI, Jerzy, 'Untitled Text by Jerzy Grotowski, Signed in Pontedera, Italy, July 4, 1998', trans. from French by Mario Biagini, *TDR: The Drama Review*, 43.2 (1999), 11-12
63. *Theater*, 29.2 (1999)
64. 'Workcenter of Jerzy Grotowski and Thomas Richards and *Action*', *TDR: The Drama Review*, 43.2 (1999), 13-14
65. *Slavic and East European Performance*, 20.2 (2000)
66. WANGH, Stephen, *An Acrobat of the Heart: A Physical Approach to Acting Inspired by the Work of Jerzy Grotowski* (New York: Vintage Books, 2000)
67. MILLING, Jane, and Graham Ley, 'Grotowski and Theoretical Training', in Jane Milling and Graham Ley, *Modern Theories of Performance: From Stanislavsky to Boal* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2001), pp. 117-41
68. WOLFORD, Lisa, 'Ambivalent Positionings: Grotowski's Art as Vehicle and the Paradox of Categorization', in *Performer Training: Developments Across Cultures*, ed. by Ian Watson (Amsterdam: Harwood Academic Publishers, 2001), pp. 117-32
69. ALLAIN, Paul, 'After Grotowski – the Next Generation', *New Theatre Quarterly*, 18.1 (2002), 59-65
70. DEGLER, Janusz, 'Jerzy Grotowski on the Books of His Youth', trans. by Jadwiga Kosicka, *Slavic and East European Performance*, 23.2 (2003), 40-48
71. ALLAIN, Paul, 'Grotowski's Ghosts', *Contemporary Theatre Review*, 15.1 (2005), 46-58
72. CUESTA, Jairo, and James Slowiak, *Jerzy Grotowski* (London and New York: Routledge, 2007)
73. YARROW, Ralph, *Sacred Theatre* (Bristol: Intellect, 2007)
74. DUNKELBERG, Kermit, 'Grotowski and North American Theatre: Translation, Transmission, Dissemination' (unpublished doctoral dissertation, New York University, 2008)
75. *Le Théâtre en Pologne/The Theatre in Poland*, guest ed. by Grzegorz Ziółkowski, 3-4 (2008)
76. *Re-Reading Grotowski*, ed. by Kris Salata and Lisa Wolford Wylam (= TDR, 52.2 (2008))
77. RICHARDS, Thomas, *Heart of Practice: Within the Workcenter of Jerzy Grotowski and Thomas Richards* (London and New York: Routledge, 2008)

78. BROOK, Peter, *With Grotowski: Theatre is Just a Form*, ed. by Georges Banu and Grzegorz Ziółkowski with Paul Allain (Wrocław: Grotowski Institute, 2009)
79. ALLAIN, Paul, ed., *Grotowski's Empty Room* (London, New York, Calcutta: Seagull Books, 2009)
80. CAMPO, Giuliano, and Zygmunt Molik, *Zygmunt Molik's Voice and Body Work: The Legacy of Jerzy Grotowski* (Abingdon and New York: Routledge, 2010)
81. PAKULA, Pablo, 'Jerzy Grotowski's Influence on British Theatre 1966-1980: Histories, Perspectives, Recollections' (unpublished doctoral dissertation, University of Kent 2011)
82. FLASZEN, Ludwik, *Grotowski & Company*, ed. by Paul Allain with the assistance of Monika Blige, trans. by Andrzej Wojtasik with Paul Allain (Abingdon and New York: Routledge Icarus, 2013)
83. SALATA, Kris, *The Unwritten Grotowski: Theory and Practice of the Encounter* (Abingdon and New York: Routledge, 2013)
84. MAGNAT, Virginie, *Grotowski, Women, and Contemporary Performance* (Abingdon and New York: Routledge, 2014)
85. CYNKUTIS, Zbigniew, *Acting with Grotowski: Theatre as a Field for Experiencing Life*, ed. by Paul Allain and Khalid Tyabji, trans. by Khalid Tyabji (~~London,~~ and New York: Routledge, 2015)

Notes on Contributors

For biographical notes on members of the Teatr Laboratorium, please see the individual chapters.

Paul Allain is Professor of Theatre and Performance at the University of Kent. He is a Polish theatre expert who collaborated with Gardzienice Theatre Association from 1989 to 1993 and who published the first English book on their work (*Gardzienice: Polish Theatre in Transition*, 1997) and has also written extensively on actor training and Tadashi Suzuki. He co-edited with Grzegorz Ziółkowski a special issue of the journal *Contemporary Theatre Review* on Polish theatre after 1989 (2005). From 2006 to 2009 he led the three-year Arts and Humanities Research Council-funded British Grotowski Project and he has collaborated extensively with the Moscow Art Theatre School. He edited the collected writings of Ludwik Flaszen (*Grotowski & Company*; 2010) and co-edited Peter Brook's *With Grotowski* (2009). His next book to be published is his co-edited *Acting with Grotowski: Theatre as a Field for Experiencing Art*, by Zbigniew Cynkutis (2015).

Tadeusz Burzyński (1939-1998) was a journalist and theatre critic who for many years followed Jerzy Grotowski's creative path. He wrote and published extensively in the periodicals *Dialog*, *Literatura*, *Odra*, *Scena*, and *Teatr*. For many years he worked for the daily newspaper *Gazeta Robotnicza* in Wrocław. Together with Zbigniew Osiński he co-wrote the volume *Grotowski's Laboratory* (1978; English translation 1979). In 2006 an anthology *Mój Grotowski* (My Grotowski) was published, gathering together his texts on the work of Jerzy Grotowski and the Teatr Laboratorium.

Leszek Kolankiewicz is Professor of Cultural Studies and the Anthropology of Performance, and Director of the Centre of Polish Culture at Paris-Sorbonne University. He is a member of the Polish National Comission for UNESCO, and a member of the Committee on Cultural Studies of the Polish Academy of Sciences. His books include *On the Road to Active Culture: The Activities of Grotowski's Theatre Laboratory Institute 1970–1977* (1978, 1979); *Święty Artaud* (Saint Artaud; 1988, 2001); *Samba z bogami. Opowieść antropologiczna* (Samba with the Gods: An Anthropological Tale; 1995, 2007); *Dziady. Teatr święta zmarłych* (Forefathers' Eve: The Theatre of the Feast Day of the Dead; 1999); and *Wielki mały wóz* (The Little Big Dipper; 2001).

Tadeusz Kornaś is a lecturer at the Jagiellonian University in Kraków and former Chief Editor of *Didaskalia* theatre journal. His publications include *Polskie alternatywne środowiska teatralne (1980–1989)* (Polish Alternative Theatre Environments; 1992), *Włodzimierz Staniewski i Ośrodek Praktyk Teatralnych „Gardzienice"* (2004), *Between Anthropology and Politics: Two Strands of Polish Alternative Theatre* (2007), *Aniołom i światu widowisko. Szkice i rozmowy o teatrze* (A Spectacle Unto the World, and to Angels: Essays and Conversations on Theatre; 2009), and *Schola Teatru Węgajty. Dramat liturgiczny* (The Teatr Węgajty Schola: Liturgical Drama; 2013).

Barbara Osterloff is a theatre critic and theatre historian, and is a professor at the Aleksander Zelwerowicz Theatre Academy in Warsaw, where she has served as vice-rector since 2008. She also teaches the history of drama in the Faculty of Media Arts and Set Design at Warsaw's Academy of Fine Arts. She has published the volume of interviews, *Pejzaż. Rozmowy z Mają Komorowską* (Landscape: Conversations with Maja Komorowska), which was voted in the journal *Teatr* as 'the most interesting theatre book of 2005'. She has published numerous theatre reviews and articles, notably on Henrik Ibsen, as well as monographs and edited volumes, including an anthology of Aleksander Zelwerowicz's writings and letters. She has recently completed a two-volume monograph on Zelwerowicz as actor, director, and pedagogue.

Krystyna Starczak-Kozłowska is a journalist, publicist, and theatre critic. She graduated from the Nicolaus Copernicus University in Toruń before founding *Kwartalnik Artystyczny*, an all-Poland journal from Bydgoszcz, and serving as its first chief editor from 1992 to 1994. She has published the monographs *Życie na przełomie*

(Life at the Turning Point; Bydgoszcz, 1999), *Oby imię przynajmniej po nas zostało* (Let There Remain At Least Our Name; Toronto, 1992), and the volume of poetry *Dotyk traw* (The Touch of Grass; Toronto, 1992). She has been based in Toronto for many years and has collaborated with the local Polish press, particularly with the newspaper *Nowy Kurier*. She regularly writes reviews of Polish diaspora theatre performances in North America.

Teresa Wilniewczyc is a philologist, theatre scholar, and editor. She is the author of a monograph on Andrzej Seweryn (2001) and has published numerous interviews with theatre and film artists. She has written for various publications, including *Notatnik Teatralny*, *Teatr*, *Rzeczpospolita*, and *Gazeta Wyborcza*.

Grzegorz Ziółkowski is Professor at Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznań. He is author of the monographs *Teatr Bezpośredni Petera Brooka* (Peter Brook's Immediate Theatre; 2000) and *Guślarz i eremita* (A Sorcerer and Hermit, 2007), on Jerzy Grotowski. He has co-edited several works: a special issue of the journal *Contemporary Theatre Review* with Paul Allain on Polish theatre after 1989 (2005), Peter Brook's *With Grotowski* (2009), and 'On Performatics' (2008), a special issue of *Performance Research*. He was Programme Director of the Grotowski Centre and the Grotowski Institute (2004-2009). In 2009 he directed an artisanal atelier for actors and directors, *To the Light*. Currently he leads ATIS (Acting Techniques Intensive Seminar) and Studio ROSA, where he directed its inaugural production TAZM Silence of Light, based on Tahar Ben Jelloun's novel ~~This Blinding Absence of Light~~.

Index of Names

Page numbers appearing in italic type refer to pages that contain illustrations.