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GROTOWSKI: Igniting the Flame

In 1959, in the provincial town of Opole, Poland, population 50,000, sixty miles from Auschwitz, Jerzy Grotowski (to be referred to, henceforth, simply as Grotowski) was named director of Teatr 13 Rzędów, the Theater of Thirteen Rows. Traveling a conventional route in terms of training and experience, he drew from it the fullest benefit and advantage to be named to this position.[1] Here, at the age of 26, Grotowski was to begin to push to its limits, both the socialist principle of total state subsidy, and the utopian vision of theater formulated by Stanislavsky and others of a "spiritual naturalism." [2]

Grotowski was born in Rzeszów, near the eastern border of Poland, on August 11, 1933. His father, originally from the Kraków area, was a painter and sculptor, who also worked in forestry. His mother was a school teacher. Both of his parents were descended from university professors, interested in science on the father's side and the orient on the mother's. His only brother, Kasiemierz, three years older, was to become a professor of theoretical physics at the Jagielloński University at Kraków.[3] His ethnic origin is mixed: on his father's side, Lithuanian, German; on his mother's side, Czech, Austrian, and Polish. Its interesting that he had a maternal grandmother descended from the French court who emigrated to Germany, then to Austria, and finally to Poland before the death of Louis XVI. His maternal grandfather attended a seminary. Just before being ordained, he made a voyage to Rome, where he saw the Pope. There he had a revelation which expressed to him that the church is not religion and he renounced his orders and married. Acknowledging that in his younger years he was influenced by his maternal relatives, Jerzy owes to his grandfather the conviction that what is sacred is not religion.[4] Also, Raymonde Temkine writes:

Among the traits common to both sides were a strong national sentiment; resolutely progressive family traditions; the acceptance of responsibility; a readiness to fight for Poland, its independence, and its liberties; university affiliations; great affinities for science, literature, and music; few religious beliefs, despite religious practices and a distant cousin who is an Orthodox priest.[5]

Until September, 1939, the Grotowski family lived in Przemyśl. When World War II broke out and Poland was invaded by Germany—his father was an officer in the Polish Army at that time and was later stationed in England—Emilia Grotowska and her two sons moved to Nienadówka, a peasant village about 12 miles north of Rzeszów, where they spent the rest of the war. After the war his father moved to Paraguay and died there in 1968. In Nienadówka, Jerzy was enrolled in a grade school where his mother was hired as a teacher. Osiński tells us in *Grotowski and His Laboratory*, Grotowski admits "the Nienadówka years were an important formative period for him. He discovered a variety of folk rites and beliefs, and he was first exposed to the personality of an inspired prophet:" [6]

My mother went to town. . . and brought back a book called *A Search in Secret India* by an English journalist named [Paul] Brunton. He talked about the people he met in India, mainly about some unusual man. He lived on the slopes of Arunachala, a holy mountain, or the Mountain of Flame. His name was Maharishi [Bhagwan Shri Râmana]. He had a peculiar custom. When someone came to him to seek explanation about the essence or meaning of life, he would ask: "Who are you?" But the question was phrased as a direct: "Ask yourself who you are." (Interview, A Bonarski, *Kultura* [1975])[7]

Grotowski completed his grade school education in Rzeszow with honors.

When he was sixteen he became gravely ill, and in fact was given up by the doctors. For an entire year he was in the hospital, in the communal ward, surrounded by terminal patients. Young Grotowski was transformed by this experience. A joyous person before—active, an ardent swimmer—afterward he began to study, to meditate, and to read a lot of books. Madame Temkine tells us in Grotowski, "He decided to devote himself to art, but if he had to choose between beauty and truth, truth would be his choice." [8]

The small Grotowski family, now headed by his mother, moved to Kraków where she got a job as a clerk in a district court for insurance claims. While in high school, Grotowski frequently gave poetry recitals in Rzeszów, Kraków and other nearby towns, often winning first prizes for his poems. He refused to attend a course in religion, because he was a passionate communist and a member of the Association of Polish Youth. [9] In a letter of recommendation, his high school teachers described him as "diligent, very talented, and a dedicated volunteer worker. He puts a lot of effort into the students' self-help system. He has considerable interests in the arts." In 1951, he graduated summa cum laude from the Fifth High School in Kraków [10] and decided to become a director. [11]

Grotowski's application to the acting program of the State Theater School in Kraków (he decided he needed experience as an actor before he could become a director) mentions his difficult financial situation and his need of financial support. He claimed his mother's meager salary was not enough to support three people and he had contributed to the family income by receiving a scholarship while in high school.

Grotowski took entrance examinations at the Theater School in September, 1951. Osiński reports:

His grades were: physical appearance, C; diction, F; voice, B; expressiveness, C. The examination committee included a note about his diction: "Wrong pronunciation of sounds /tz/, /z/, /s/, /rh/, and /sh/" but he was allowed to take the written test. The applicants were asked to write on one of the following topics:

1. How can theater contribute to the development of socialism in Poland?
2. How do you understand the actor's task in the theater?
3. Discuss one of the award-winning works at the Festival of Contemporary Polish Plays. [12]

Grotowski chose the first topic and received an "A" for his essay. On the basis of his written essay and his high school recommendation, he was accepted on probation with an average grade of "C," but, he was denied any financial aid. [13]

While enrolled in the acting program of the Theater School in Kraków from October 1, 1951, until June 30, 1955, he also continued to cultivate his interest in the Orient, going to lectures, studying on his own, and consulting with his professors. Among them was Professor Helena Willman-Grabowska (1857-1957), an authority on Indian and Iranian culture, and Dr. Franciszek Tokarz (1879-1973), a specialist in Indian philosophy. While a theater student at Kraków, according to Osiński, Grotowski seriously considered transferring to the East Asian program or to the medical school. [14]

In his second year, as the president of the Students Research Club at the Theater School in Kraków, Grotowski traveled to regional and national conferences. In December 1954, during the thirteenth meeting of the Arts Council in Warsaw, Grotowski urged authorities to be more supportive of the young generation of theater artists.[15] According to one report:

Grotowski was concerned that the sickly atmosphere in theatres is beginning to infiltrate theatre schools. Moral cynicism, careerism, and the pursuit of material values are the most dangerous symptoms of demoralization. But he is no pessimist. He sees evil, and he wants to do something about it. Young theater artists, Grotowski said, want romantic and heroic ideals. Those who are better and wiser are still in the majority. But that's where the bitterness creeps in. Young actors are left largely to themselves. Rarely do they meet with understanding from directors or older actors, and the authorities, including the Ministry of Culture, couldn't care less. Grotowski called for a congress of young theatre artists, which would allow them to solve many difficult and complex problems. (J. Timoszewicz, *Po prostu* [1954])[16]

As a fourth year student, 1954-1955, Grotowski was involved in the master's projects of the graduating class at the Theater School. In a production of Schiller's *Love and Intrigue*, he was assistant to the faculty supervisor, Professor Wladyslaw Krzemiński. Grotowski played Pyotr in Gorky's *The Smug Citizen* and he directed *Love Scenes*, a collage of excerpts from plays by Juliusz Slowacki (*Balladyna*, *Beatrice Cenci*, *Kordian*, *Mazeppa*, *Mary Stuart*, etc.).[17]

In early 1955, Grotowski debuted as a free-lance writer. His first article, "The Red Balloon," published in a supplement to the *Kraków Dziennik Polski*, called for the establishment of a Young Artist's Club in Kraków:

We must pay tribute to tradition with actions, not words. We must cultivate the seeds of the past, which may flourish into new values on modern soil We wish to influence man and the world with our art. We've got the courage to fight openly and fervently the most important issues, because only such issues are worth fighting for.[18]

The responses to Grotowski's article served to focus his artistic vision. Critic and playwright Jan Gawlik wrote: "I don't know Grotowski personally, but I know that his head is on fire. In his article, there's plenty of nonconformism, bragging, and clichés, a pinch of complacency, typical of youth. But there's also something that commands attention." [19] Writer and actor Leszek Herdegen openly criticized Grotowski by saying:

It's not enough to have a firm ideology, it's not enough to be a member of the Polish Youth Union, it's not enough to be a volunteer worker in order to be an artist You must have your own, unique artistic program. . . . You've got to know what you want to accomplish as an artist.[20]

Playwright Slawomir Mrozek attacked Grotowski even more violently:

Let's assume that Grotowski is really on fire. Unfortunately, nobody really knows what's burning there. Pray, Grotowski, why didn't you give us some specific examples? You signed yourself a theatre student but there's not even a small mention, for example, of what you're trying to accomplish in the theatre. Grotowski, you want to knock something over or go somewhere, you shake your fists at someone, but pray, tell us what, where, who.[21]

Grotowski's response to his critics is his article, "Dream of the Theater," which appeared in *Dziennik Polski* on February 23, 1955. Here, his version of a theater of grand emotions was developed:

A performance may be well acted and directed, yet the audience feels there's something missing. We must, then, thoroughly revise the very idea, style, and artistic impact of the theatre. . . . To us, the strength of the theatre lies in action, in the enactment of life in front of us. . . . Therefore we need means especially suitable for producing an emotional effect. . . . I'm talking about the poetic structure of a theatre work not in isolation from, but in close connection with, the dramatic text. The theatre of grand emotions . . . requires the great romantic repertory: from Shakespeare, Mickiewicz, and Slowacki to Wyspiański, Vishnevsky, and Pogodin.

He chose Hamlet to illustrate his concept of "the theatre of grand emotions," which demands "courage, persistence, and hard work":

. . . A production of Hamlet is especially suitable to emphasize, for example, "an obsessive drive to revenge leading to self-destruction." One would then play up those moments which show the protagonist motivated by his will to revenge, getting himself entangled in dangerous circumstances, and eventually becoming destroyed by his mounting "obsession." But this drama may also be staged as a psychological tragedy of a weak individual. Hamlet's philosophical deliberations would be then reduced to mere complaints of a powerless thinker.

In the theatre of grand emotions, we can use Hamlet to evoke in the audience a cult of heroic and human greatness. "There's something rotten in the state of Denmark": the court's corruption, intrigues, hypocrisy, villainy, exploitation, and the unscrupulousness of those in power. But we can juxtapose this corruption with the young man's heroic struggle against fraud and inhumanity, challenging the sacred laws of the monarchy, family, and tradition. Hamlet sacrifices everything for his struggle, including his own life. . . . If we communicate this in our production, then we have accomplished our goal, and the desired grand emotions will be evoked in the spectators' hearts. The famous monologue, "To be or not to be," will not be a weak man's helpless whining but an expression of the inner struggle of a man who must decide "Whether 'tis nobler in the mind to suffer/ The slings and arrows of outrageous fortune/ Or to take arms against a sea of troubles,/ And by opposing end them?"—a man who discards vacillation and chooses action.

When we compose the scenic action from the point of view of grand emotions, we must abandon all real life details in Hamlet whenever they aren't absolutely necessary to evoke the emotions or to clarify the action. . . . Natural acting and conscious structuring of the action don't exclude one another, but are a measure of the actor's art. . . . The poetry of action in its emotional impact should be reinforced by music, light and color, evocative rhythm, and synthetic spatial architecture, helpful for the actor's movement. Each of these elements should be realized not naturally, "if it will seem to be in the reality of time," but on a way which will reinforce the emotional impact of the action.[22]

In June 1955, Grotowski graduated from the Theater School with an actor's certificate. He was assigned to the Stary [Old] Theater of Kraków after his graduation according to the then current practice of the State. The contract he received guaranteed him employment in the theater from October 1, 1955 until September 30, 1958, but his appointment was delayed when he received a scholarship to study directing at the State Institute of Theater Arts (G.I.T.I.S) in Moscow.[23]

Grotowski was enrolled in the G.I.T.I.S directing program from August 23, 1955, until June 15, 1956. Under the supervision of Yuri Zavadsky, he directed *The Mother* by Jerzy Szaniawski at the theater Institute. He was Zavadsky's assistant in the production of *Zialpotov* by L.G. Zotin, which opened on April 27, 1956 at the Mossoviet Theater. His professors left him free to accomplish his routine apprenticeship. He met Zavadsky ten years later in the hall of Théâtre Sarah Bernhardt, where, during the season of Théâtre des Nations, the Mossoviet Theater of Moscow performed

Gogol under Zavadsky's direction. The old man looked at Grotowski, took his glasses off, recognized him and opened his arms to him.[24] He also directed productions at the Mossoviet and Moscow Art Theater, and he studied the techniques of Stanislavsky, Vakhtangov, Meyerhold, and Tairov.[25]

At that time he was especially interested in Stanislavsky. As he says, Osiński writes, he already knew "the method of physical actions." When he was leaving for the Soviet Union, he was known as "a fanatic disciple of Stanislavsky." Following the current fad and the official directive, they also claimed to be "disciples of Stanislavsky," but their commitment was to be questioned:[26]

Grotowski was different. To him, the Stanislavsky method was a serious matter and he wanted to know it thoroughly. He went to Moscow to study the method at its source. But his stay brought more than he'd hoped for. He discovered Meyerhold. He studied his legacy, especially the documentation of Meyerhold's production of *The Inspector General*, and he left Moscow fascinated by what he'd found.[27]

Madame Temkin tells us, "It is through Meyerhold that Grotowski understood that staging a play is but an answer to the play; not a submission but a reaction—this is the meaning of creation." [28] In this confrontation with Meyerhold, Grotowski did not lose interest in Stanislavsky, but instead now appeared more multi-dimensional than before.

. . . The apprentice learned from him full awareness of an actor's craft. He was taken by the scientific turn of his theories. He became a fanatic follower of Stanislavsky. . . . He was grateful to Stanislavsky for having asked the fundamental questions. . . . Grotowski did not subscribe to his master's answers. The denial honors them both. In spite of artistic differences, Stanislavsky remained a model for him. [29]

It was then that Grotowski finally accepted Stanislavsky as a role model.[30]

Of course Grotowski owes a great deal to Meyerhold, as well. Temkine writes:

. . . Grotowski's mentality is such that it attaches itself to creative ideas which he in turn uses as instruments of personal investigation. The logic implicit within them is then pushed to the extreme. It is not a question of influence but of a kind of transmission. The torch is taken up once again but not as a relic, to be extinguished with reverence or be placed under a globe, nor like a sacred flame to be piously reserved, rather a flame capable of lighting a new hearth. What comes of it no longer concerns him.

Superficially, it seems that he has learned more from Meyerhold than from Stanislavsky. What Meyerhold has transmitted to him is a conception of the theatre, and, in a broader sense, of creation. To create is not to reproduce, reconstitute, or to be faithful to—though these are always tempting to a director; it is rather to criticize, contest, take liberties—it is to claim co-authorship. It may be said that Meyerhold taught him to care, but he owes even more to Stanislavsky. It is not evident. And as for aesthetics, it is their oppositions which are quite clear.[31]

According to Kumiega, crediting the Polish writer Kazimierz Braun, ill-health again interrupted Grotowski's studies. It was in order to recuperate that he obtained a fellowship and made his first journey to Central Asia, travelling for two months during the summer of 1956. Several years later he wrote:

During my expeditions in Central Asia in 1956, between an old Turmenian town Ashkhabad and the western range of the Hindu Kush Mountains, I met an old Afghan named Abdullah who performed for me a pantomime "of the whole world." The pantomime is like the world at large, and the

world at large is like the pantomime. It occurred to me then that I'm listening to my own thoughts. Nature—changeable, movable, but permanently unique at the same time—has always been embodied in my imagination as the dancing mime, unique and universal, hiding under the glittering of multiple gestures, colors, and the grimace of life. (Ekran, [1959])[32]

Here he discovered a country that captured his imagination, and he made a start on what was the basis of his later approaches to Sanskrit and Oriental philosophy. However, he decided that this system of thought was not for Europeans. Temkine quotes Grotowski:

. . . they must look for another cradle. . . . The European actor must only borrow techniques for the Chinese opera. These are not effective outside their land of origin. Such techniques can become an enriching factor only when integrated into a coherent method. In this manner, new meaning is infused into them. . . . [33]

The period from 1939-1956 had been one of almost total stagnation in the theatrical world in Poland. Not only were all theaters closed down during the war, and many theater artists killed or imprisoned, but even after liberation there was an enforced program of Socialist Realism proclaimed in 1949 at the Congress of the Polish Writers Union. This, combined with a policy of centralized administration, succeeded in destroying all the creative independence that makes theater so valuable. With the general relaxation of restrictions in the mid-fifties, however, the Polish theater began to flourish again. Regional ambitions were encouraged and reinforced by an atmosphere of greater artistic liberty, that made possible the kind of personalized research that Grotowski foresaw for his institute.[34]

Grotowski returned to Poland in October 1956 to study directing and took a junior teaching position at the Kraków Theater School, but the events of this time also involved him. A gradual "de-stalinization" had been spreading outward from the Soviet Union since 1953. When it finally arrived in the satellite countries the political reversal released a flood of frustrated liberalism. Movements of doubt and protest, led by artists and Party intellectuals such as Jan Kott and Leszek Kolakowski gathered momentum. Most important to the State was the need to halt the democratization, but in a way that did not damage the flimsy fabric of the individual's cooperation.[35]

Recently released from prison, Wladyslaw Gomulka, with his professed creed of a "Polish Road to Socialism," was elected First Secretary at the 8th Plenum of the Central Committee of the Polish United Workers Party in 1956, and certain internal freedom was given by Soviet authorities. The over-optimistic liberals within Poland were to be disillusioned during the fluctuating periods that followed, until the events of 1968 and Gomulka's deposal in 1970. His achievements included a more energetic flow of cultural communication between Poland and the Western world.[36]

As Osiński points out, Grotowski is by temperament an activist, and it is not surprising that he did not stay in the background during these events. In the months following the "Polish October" Grotowski enjoyed what Osinski describes as a "short but tempestuous adventure" actively and vociferously participating in meetings of the political youth organizations, becoming (in January 1957) a Secretary of the Central Committee of the Socialist Youth Movement.[37]

Although the Polish Youth Union was still in existence, other youth organizations emerged in 1956. Among them were the revolutionary Union of Youth (RZM) and the Union of Working Youth (ZMR). In preparation for a Conference that would unite both organizations to give them more power, politically, the National Center was set up with Grotowski, a RZM organizer, serving as vice chairman. The Conference never took place and in early 1957, the Polish Youth Union was dissolved. Left-oriented, anti-Stalinist youth activists then joined the Provisional Central Committee of the Union of Socialist Youth with Grotowski as one of the members of its governing body, the Secretariat. Thus, out of the fusion of RZM and ZMR, a new organization, the Union of Soviet Youth (ZMS) was founded.[38]

Grotowski co-founded, with Adam Ogorzalek, the ZMS Political Center of the Academic Left (POLA ZMS) and in developing its program, they wrote:

We want an organization that will teach people to think politically, to understand their interests, to fight for bread and democracy and for justice and truth in everyday life. We must fight for people to live like humans and to be masters of their fate. We must fight for young people's right to work, learn, and to have a career. We must fight for workers' universities, against employment of minors in hard and demanding jobs for fair allocation of summer leaves, apartments, and bonuses, for equal rights for blue and white collar workers, for fair work standards, for the primacy of specialists. We must fight for young people to live a better and more satisfying life. We must fight for people to speak their minds without fear of being harassed. We must fight so that stupid and corrupt individuals won't hold positions of responsibility.[39]

In April 1957, at a assemblage of ZMS in Warsaw, Grotowski was among speakers in a discussion. His remarks focused on the struggle for a "system in which civilization, democracy, and justice have a common denominator." In order for the system to become reality he stated:[40]

People must understand that if they don't stop pouting, join in the life of the country, and work for the common cause, then we may expect a catastrophe, bloodshed and destruction, and a takeover of despotism. . . . No one can give us bread, civilization and freedom. We must make bread, just as we must make freedom and civilization happen. It's not true that one can hide away in one's private little world and go on living. . . . In our country, young people look forward to civilization, to a decent standard of living, to justice, to decision-making about their own lives, to technological progress. Ours is a road to civilization and freedom.[41]

Eighteen years later he referred to these years in an interview:

In another period of my life, let's call them the October and post-October years, I wanted to be a political saint, one of the foremost. And I was so fascinated by Ghandi that I wanted to be him. I came to the conclusion that not only was this improbable for objective reasons, but incompatible with my nature—although equal to fair play I am incapable of a total and generalized assumption of everyone's good intentions. . . .

If I were ever to build the self-portrait of my dreams—at the very center would be a liberated life, the original state, freedom. . . . For me, freedom is connected with the supreme temptation. It exists for the individual, even if unaware of it. . . . Freedom is associated neither with freedom of choice, nor with sheer volunteerism—but with a wave, with giving oneself up to a huge wave, in accordance with one's desire. And when I speak of desire, it is like water in the desert or a gasp of air to someone who is drowning. [169/22-23][42]

In the years between the events of 1956 and the beginning of his professional directorial career in Opole in 1959, Grotowski remained mostly in Kraków, while he completed his directing studies at the Theater School and worked on his first productions in the professional Old Theater. Adamov, Beckett, Camus, Dürrenmatt, Genet, Ionesco, and Sartre were suddenly discovered by Polish theater artists and their audiences. As assistant professor in the Theater School from April 1957 to summer 1959, his first production, co-directed with Aleksandra Mianowska, was *The Chairs* by Eugene Ionesco. The translation had appeared in April in the monthly magazine, *Dialog*. [43] Immediately afterward he went into rehearsal and the production opened two months later. Josef Gruda wrote: "The invisible directors, Jerzy Grotowski and Aleksandra Mianowska, have tactfully removed themselves from the actors's path. They are absolutely right." Stefan Otwinowski spoke of the performance a "great theatre of moral and political allusions." Tadeusz Kudliński described the production as follows:

It strikes a balance between the naturalistic and non-realistic. The actors are "natural," while the unusual twists and disjunctions of action have been successfully translated into expressive lighting and music. . . . The play's symbolism has been carefully preserved, and it is up to the audience to interpret the symbols. Both in terms of acting and directing, there were powerful moments, but there were also weak spots. . . . In spite of the naturalistic acting, one senses a different plan of reality, especially in the perceptively acted scenes with invisible guests asking for empty chairs. The cast was able to evoke the invisible and to suggest non-existent relationships. (Tygodnik Powszechny [1957])[44]

The following month Grotowski visited France for the first time for the annual International Youth Meeting in Avignon. During this time he learned of the work of Jean Vilar and his teacher, Dullin, before spending some time in Paris and then returning to Poland. In "Towards a Poor Theatre," an article first published in 1965, he writes:

I have studied all the major actor-training methods of Europe and beyond. Most important for my purposes are: Dullin's rhythm exercises, Delsarte's investigations of extroversive and introversive reactions, Stanislavsky's work on "physical actions," Meyerhold's bio-mechanical training, Vakhtangov's synthesis. Also particularly stimulating to me are the training techniques of oriental theatre—specifically the Peking Opera, Indian Kathakali, and Japanese No theatre.[45]

Quoting a letter to him from Marian Stepein, Osiński tells us:

In the fall of 1957 Grotowski was called by the Kraków political authorities to justify his participation in the activities of the POLA ZMS. His explanation was accepted only partially, and he was later criticized and attacked for his association with the organization.[46]

Between December, 1957, and June, 1958, Grotowski organized and led a series of regular, well attended weekly lectures on Oriental philosophy in the Student Club in Kraków. The subjects included Buddhism, Yoga, the Upanishads,[47] Confucius, Taoism and Zen-Buddhism. During this period he also directed plays for the Polish Radio, including an adaptation based on Kalidasa's poem Sakuntala, for which he received an award.[48]

The production of Merimée's *The Woman is a Devil* was Grotowski's Master's project at the Theater School. Performed by a quartet of actors against a backdrop of black curtains, the costumes were limited to black sweaters and street clothes. A student provided guitar accompaniment. The set consisted of four classroom desks and a colorful poster upstage saying "Kill Rats." [49] Writing in the introduction to an interview of Grotowski by Jerzy Falkowski, printed in *Współczesność*, Władysław Krezemiński, dean of the Directing Program at the Kraków Theater School and director of the Stary Theater of Kraków states:

Jerzy Grotowski's skill and intuition as a director reveal a major artistic talent. Not without solid reason do theatre artists see in him someone capable of highly innovative work on stage and with the actor. This young man is a director/philosopher, fond of synthesis and aggressive means of expression, but he uses them not to conform to a new fad but to infuse the audience with his own socially passionate and intellectually fascinating attitudes on life. I, his professor, wish him success and believe in his success.[50]

Gods of Ruin, based on a contemporary play by Jerzy Krzyszton, premiered July 4, 1958. One critic described it as a "violent collision between director and author, theater and literature," [361/42][51] that showed aspects of Meyerhold's constructivism. According to Osiński, Konrad Eberhardt wrote:

Grotowski threw himself on the *Krzysztoń* script aggressively, cut it apart, and adapted it for his purposes. Small wonder that the program notes for the production carry this epigraph from Meyerhold: "To choose a play does not necessarily mean to share the playwright's views." Grotowski strove to transform this fairly traditional, small-cast play without excessive intellectual overloading into a more universal statement about the younger generation, modeled on the work of Piscator. (Ekran, [1958])[52]

Critic Jerzy Falkowski wrote of the production, "One senses a gap between the plot and the *mise-en-scène*, which was probably not intended by the director. At times it is like shooting a fly with a cannon." (*Współczesność* [1958])[53] The playwright, *Krzysztoń*, observed many years later, "Grotowski staged this good-natured, realistic comedy, which preserves the three unities and deals with the ill-fated love of two very immature young people, as an attack against the ills of the century, as a manifesto, a morality play, and a warning." (*Teatr* [1973])[54]

It was presented on a triple stage, the actors wore masks, and Grotowski incorporated extracts from six other poets and writers into author *Krzysztoń's* original. He also used a film montage for the prologue. Four months later he directed another version of the same work under a different title. As a guest director at the Opole Theater of Thirteen Rows, which he was to head in less than a year, he directed *The Ill-Fated* from another of *Krzysztoń's* scripts, *The Ill-Fated Family*. In an interview for *Trybuna Opolska*, Grotowski said: "I believe that a dramatic script should provide only a theme for the director who will use it as the basis for a new, independent work, a theater production." [55]

The program notes for *The Ill-Fated* included Grotowski's statement titled "Theatre and the Grail," which read in part:

My theatre does not bow down when the audience is kind enough to applaud. In my theatre, emotions are not artificial, tears are not faked, and pathos is not pitiful because they serve a purpose—they show, to quote Hamlet, "the very age and body of the time his form and pressure." . . . Man is full of anxiety and fear. He knows that he will pass away, and he does not want to know that he will pass away. He knows his weaknesses. He is victimizer and victim. But faced with time, he is alone Man searches for the Grail, a chalice molded out of infinity, which delivers man from weakness and death. [56]

In an interview with Jerzy Falkowski for the literary magazine, *Współczesność*, he says:

I have chosen the artistic profession because I realized quite early that I am being haunted by a certain "thematic concern" a certain "leading motif" and a desire to reveal that "concern" and present it to other people. . . . I am haunted by the problem of human loneliness and the inevitability of death. But a human being (and here begins my "leading motif") is capable of acting against one's own loneliness and death. If one involves oneself in problems outside narrow spheres of interests, . . . if one recognizes the union of man and nature, if one is aware of the indivisible unity of nature and finds one's identity within it, . . . then one attains an essential degree of liberation. [57]

Grotowski also said that dramatic works of great playwrights offer "an excellent and unique basis for the director's *mise en scène*." Moreover:

In my artistic explorations, I intend to fight against "creating moods" on stage and against real-life imitations which carry no meaning. I will fight against emotionalism on stage and in the audience, if it does not serve our understanding. The action convention (or several conventions within a single production), the use of performance space, the sets and props—all these, apart from real-life and situational functions, should also serve a purely theatrical function. [58]

He also warned, "I have never chosen a permanent artistic `program,' calculated in advance in cold blood. I do not intend to stick to any ready-made theories. I am a young director. Life and the work of others are my teachers." [59]

At the beginning of 1959 Grotowski once again visited Paris, where he met Marcel Marceau and was very impressed by the mime's work. He wrote an essay on Marceau and smuggled into it his artistic credo: "Modern man, placed by science in a cosmos without heaven, gods, and demons . . . can find some hope, psychologically rooted in the unity and immortality of nature." (Ekran [1959]) [60]

Six years later he responded to questions about certain aspects of his work as it relates to another French artist and others:

. . . I am often asked about Artaud when I speak of "cruelty," although Artaud's formulations were based on different premises and took a different tack. Artaud was an extraordinary visionary, but his writings have little methodological meaning because they are not the product of long-term practical investigations. They are an astounding prophecy, not a program. When I speak of "roots" or "mythical soul," I am asked about Nietzsche; if I call it "group imagination," Durheim comes up; if I call it "archetypes," Jung. . . . When I speak of the actor's expression of signs, I am asked about oriental theater, particularly classical Chinese theatre (especially when it is known that I studied there). [61]

During his Kraków period of 1959 he published several articles. In "Theatre and the Cosmic Man," he discussed "the simultaneous death and triumph" of the theater. He concludes the theater can survive only as art born of immediacy:

At its best, the art of *mise-en-scène* has partially freed the theatre from the form of docudrama. Possibly not quite intentionally it has provided a chance for the theatre to become a place of direct contact between artists and spectators, where the attention, thought, and will of the participants are united in a communal "plunge" into existential problems of human fate, interpersonal connections, and the relationship of man to Cosmos in order to find a seed of hope. . . . The transition from contemporary anachronistic theatre of the present, theatre as "an art of the stage," to the theatre of the future is . . . a gradual metamorphosis of the performance whose role as a "show" (actors showing an action to spectators) will diminish, while its role as a "dialogue" between the stage and the audience will increase. [62]

In "Death and Reincarnation of the Theatre," Grotowski again talks about the death of theater in its present form. The *mise en scène*, he says, which relies on the presence of live people on each side of the footlights, may consciously lead to direct contact between them":

The trump card for the theater, its last chance and the basic premise of the "theater of the future" or the "neo-theater," is the possibility for direct contact, togetherness, and dialogue between the stage and the audience. This possibility, which is inherent only in the theatre, can produce the "neo-theater." . . . The "neo-theatre" will stop being theatre in the present meaning of the word. It will become a new branch of the arts. [63]

In "Good or Bad," Grotowski examines the weakness of Polish Theater schools. In particular, their alienation from their specific audience, their graduates' decreasing sense of artistic responsibility and the uneven quality existing among students. He recommends a master/disciple system and the institution of research and developmental programs in theater schools. The goal should be "to carry on research into applied aesthetics (trends, methods, theories, styles, and formal developments in theaters past and present) and applied psychology (psychodynamics of the actor's work and audience psychology)." In the same article, Grotowski explains his understanding of "artistic responsibility," ". . . the theatre is more than a place where one earns one's living. . . . Moreover, one cannot accept the theatre as it is but as it should be." [64]

In March of 1959, Grotowski directed his final production at the Old Theater in Kraków, Chekhov's *Uncle Vanya*, before moving to Opole. The press reaction was cool, including one review by Ludwik Flaszen, shortly to become Grotowski's colleague. He described the production as conventional, disciplined and intellectual, lacking only distance and humor:

Grotowski strove to show Chekhov our contemporary, who could speak to the audience directly, without the costumes of time and place. Hence Grotowski got rid of—whenever possible—all Russian local color and stressed instead universal values. He toned down—whenever possible—the period characteristics and thus emphasized the timeless nature of the play. Thus he secured the first stipulation of the truly modern theatre: a non-realistic form which is not a literal imitation of life.

Grotowski's Chekhov is non-realistic, disciplined, and intellectual. He got rid of the naturalistic detail and toned down the moods and emotionalism, and thus his Chekhov is no longer a modernist explorer of souls but rather a young village teacher from the positivist era. (Echo Krakowa [1959])[65]

Three years older than Grotowski, Flaszen was an acknowledged literary and theater critic. He had been Literary Director of the Slowacki Theater in Kraków for three years and the author of a book, *The Head and the Wall*. In the early spring of 1959 he was approached by the Opole authorities to head and revitalize the small Theater of Thirteen Rows. This theater was set up in early 1958 by two actors from the conventional Teatr Ziemi Opolskiej in Opole to establish a contemporary alternative in the town. It was a long, low room in the market-place, where they constructed a small proscenium stage and set out thirteen rows of seats. But after only two productions, the second directed by Grotowski, the theater closed down because, according to Kumiega in *The Theatre of Grotowski*, the financial authorities had categorized the enterprise as a "private business" and the actors were unable to pay their taxes. On being approached for the directorship, Flaszen felt that this job was beyond his capabilities, so, in May 1959 he contacted Grotowski. Their meeting was described in a 1966 interview with Flaszen:

At a Kraków crossing two people met: Jerzy Grotowski and Ludwig Flaszen. The first had come to the conclusion that he was thoroughly fed up with the Old Theatre and with old theatre. Flaszen was also fed up with old theatre—theatre was an art located at the tail end of other artistic disciplines . . . [31][66]

At subsequent meetings with the Opole authorities, Grotowski put forward proposals for the following season's repertory and a tour of the major Polish cities. He also laid down the conditions for the establishment of the theater, including a free hand in the selection of the plays and company, the establishment of the post of Literary Director and a permanent subsidy of a budget level permitting work without interruption. These conditions were agreed to, with the subsidy granted by the Opole People's Council, permitted the establishment of "the only professional experimental theater in Poland." [67]

The company for the 1959-60 season was small and committed to the idea of the ensemble. Two weeks after the premiere of Jean Cocteau's *Orpheus* on October 8, 1959, Echo Krakowa printed an interview with Grotowski and Flaszen:

It seems, said Grotowski, that we have the smallest troupe in Poland, nine people, and, of that, two women. It is a pleasure to say that the actors work with great seriousness of purpose and personal sacrifice. . . . The originality of our theatre is that we are a stage without a prompter; we do no sitting rehearsals, only situational ones; and our budget is one-tenth the sum needed by your average theatre. . . . We do not choose to focus on the "absurdity of life." We see and want to find some hope. In the language of theatre, that hope lies somewhere between two extremes of reality—the tragic and the grotesque. [68]

This group was quite fluid during the first few years, but of the original nine actors, three remained with Grotowski to form part of his permanent company. They were Rena Mirecka, fresh from actor training at Kraków Theater School; Zygmunt Molik, who also trained at Kraków but had since worked at the Teatr Ziemi Opolskiej in Opole; and Antoni Jaholkowski, who had transferred to Grotowski's group from another theater. In 1961 they were joined by Zbigniew Cynkutis (also a defector from the Teatr Ziemi Opolskiej) and Ryszard Cieślak. With the addition of Stanislaw Scierski in 1964, the Laboratory Theater acting company was complete except for the only non-Pole, Elizabeth Albahaca, a South African, who joined in the late sixties. The basic stability of this core of actors has been one of the significant factors of the company's development and the quality of their work.[69]

Ludwik Flaszen, a co-founder, took the post of Literary Director. But he might also be called Dramaturge, because the role he actually played went beyond a responsibility for literature and was crucial in the development of the theoretical concepts that motivated the theatrical experiments. He describes the relationship as follows:

While I was sometimes a spokesman, my essential work all these years has been talking with Grotowski—a kind of dialogue covering many years. . . . we agreed to be absolutely sincere with each other. I told him what I really thought about what was happening—its possibilities. I pointed out to him what was himself and what was the inherited tradition and the mistakes of the past. For example, when I analyzed Grotowski's work for him, I tried to find all that had become merely a shell, the reasoned or the artificial. I analyzed what could be rejected. When I felt my analysis was helpless, I knew I was dealing with something alive. [143/303-304][70]

The theater received a grant from the municipality. In the beginning this was probably the only country to allow itself the luxury of a "theatre laboratory" and yet was so poor that its actors practically starved. "Poverty was at first a practice of this theatre; only later was it raised to the dignity of aesthetics." [322/199][71]

For several years, I vacillated between practice-born impulses and the application of a priori principals, without seeing the contradiction. My friend and colleague Ludwik Flaszen was the first to point out this confusion in my work: the material and techniques which came spontaneously in preparing the production, from the very nature of the work, were revealing and promising; but what I had taken to be applications of theoretical assumptions were actually more functions of my personality than of my intellect. I realized that the production led to awareness rather than being the product of awareness. Since 1960, my emphasis has been on methodology. Through practical experimentation I sought to answer the questions with which I has begun: What is the Theatre? What is unique about it? What can it do that film and television cannot? Two concrete conceptions crystallized: the poor theater, and performance as an act of transgression.[72]

Grotowski was already familiar to the critics from his theatrical activities in Kraków and from his published writings: over twenty articles by this time, mostly in local newspapers and youth magazines. The tone of youthful dogma, dedicated to transforming theater, antagonized the theatrical establishment, who found his theatrical practice too flamboyant and intellectual.

In Poland in 1959, when Grotowski founded, with Flaszen, his small experimental theater company in Opole, there were additional forces at play affecting the balance of disciplines in the theater: the avant-garde influences from the West and the Poles' reaction to them; the emphasis on the textural and technical aspects of scenic production; and, the prominence of either an un-disciplined or an over-intellectual approach to acting. The result of all this was to reduce the actor to the status of puppet, or as the critic Jan Klossowicz expresses in his 1971 article: "an executor of the will of the all-powerful director." [309/4][73] Within this context Grotowski was proposing an artistic program in opposition to the mainstream. It could be said of his earliest work that its strongest cha-

racteristic was precisely that of contradiction and defiance of existing practice—a polemical attitude which, twenty years later, Grotowski claimed to have been a conscious principle throughout his work. "I would like to remind you that the work of our institution has invariably followed a path complementary to—and in a way at variance with—current trends in culture. Such is our calling." [95/40][74]

Flaszen describes the process of *via negativa*, or the eliminatory process to which Grotowski subjected his art, with an emphasis on the relationship between theater and text:

To create theatre we must go beyond literature; theatre starts where the word ceases. The fact that a theatrical language cannot be a language of words, but its own language, constructed from its own substance—is a radical step for theater, but Artaud had already realized this in his dreams. . . . The same line of thought that sees a possibility for theatre today through a state of isolation, tells us not only to go beyond the discursive word, but also to reject everything not strictly essential for the theatrical phenomenon. . . . The proper subject-matter of theatre, its own particular score belonging to no other form of art is—in Grotowski's words—the score of human impulses and reactions. The psychic process, revealed through the bodily and vocal reactions of a living, human organism. That is the essence of theatre. [135/112][75]

However, these theories were not apparent in the first production of the Theater of Thirteen Rows. One of the actors in *Orpheus* has reported that Grotowski had every aspect of this production worked out in advance of the rehearsal period, which lasted three weeks. Three weeks doesn't allow for real exploration by the actor and director, consequently his method was very practical, and produced stilted results. Kazimierz Braun has described the production as "acted in a bizarre and awkward manner, on an ordinary endstage. The stage design was basically realistic, although clearly slapdash and thrown together, and the costumes were conspicuously shoddy." [173/161][76] Grotowski treated the text of *Orpheus* as a springboard for a debate both with Cocteau and the audience. The counterpoint rhythm of the performance, consisting of grotesque sequences alternating with serious moments, drew attention to itself.[77]

Cain with a text by Lord Byron, which critics familiar with Grotowski's work have called the first really important premiere of the Theater of Thirteen Rows, followed on January 30, 1960. According to Kumiega in *The Theatre of Grotowski*:

This performance, like the earlier *Orpheus*, was based on richly augmented visual and theatrical elements and technical tricks, and not on the art of the actor. It was—as Grotowski described it later—"more in the nature of an exorcism of conventional theater than a proposition of a counter-program" and in consequence "formulated the negative program of the company." [360/16][78]

Following their runs in Opole, *Cain* and *Orpheus* toured Poland, giving performances in Katowice, Kraków and Warsaw. During the tour Grotowski was working on a production of *Faust* at the Polish Theater in Poznań. It was the only piece he directed outside of his group and it opened in April 1960.[79]

Zbigniew Cynkutis, at that time a newly graduated actor working at the conventional Teatr Ziemi Opolskiej in Opole, but soon to transfer and work with Grotowski until the present recalled for Kumiega in an interview she conducted with him in April 1981:

Although these people had been called dilettantes by those wiser than I, what I found there gave me hope. There was something I hadn't met in the conventional theater or even during study—I mean the discipline of those on stage. There was construction, structure, consciousness, and there was risk. It was something they did with belief, trust and with hope. And furthermore, they gave their performance with only five people sitting and watching. . . . So I felt that this group had respect for those coming to see them, even when it was such a small number. There was something between them and each visitor.[80]

Meetings, poetry readings and other public discussions of the company's selection of plays were scheduled to gain support for the theater. In May 1960 an organization called the Circle of Friends of the Theatre of Thirteen Rows was established with about eighty members. The group met every two weeks for discussions led by Grotowski and Flaszen of practical aspects of the new theater's artistic policies in relation to contemporary theater practices. Osiński calls both the Circle and discussions "a factor in the development of an atmosphere favorable to the work of the Group" and also, with potentially sinister overtones, "a fight for the public through their systematic education." [361/75][81]

The company ended their first season in July 1960 with a production of Mayakovsky's *Mystery-Bouffe* and opened the new season with an adaptation of Kalidasa's poem *Sakuntala*, which, we recall, Grotowski had directed as a radio play. During the production of *Sakuntala*, he began his artistic collaboration with the architect Jerzy Gurawski, which I will discuss in some detail a little later. In the meantime, Grotowski finally received his diploma from the Kraków Theater School, and the title of qualified director.

This season was an important period of work for Grotowski and his young ensemble. They were about to complete two full seasons of productions and tours and, despite opposition to the elitist nature of their experimental work, would remain firmly in residence in their provincial "laboratory." However, up to this point, they could be said to resemble any other young theater group in Poland who had managed to produce respectable theater for their community with minimum financial resources. However, what was beginning to evolve between Grotowski and Flaszen with the dedicated acting ensemble, was a set of ideas and propositions, profoundly simple, if not yet minimalist, that had been tested and refined in workshop and rehearsal. These performance theories were to become internationally known very soon and, at least for a decade or two, turn the craft of acting in many parts of the world into an art.

It is possible that one of the reasons Grotowski selected *Sakuntala* (*Siakuntala*), after the drama Kalidasa, to open the second season in Opole, 1960-61, was to explore further the alienation qualities of literary text and to free the actor from literature's overpowering influence. M.K. Byrski, in an article titled "Grotowski and the Indian Tradition" explained that Grotowski "was searching for a score that could be performed by the team with complete freedom to 'instrumentate' . . . and of course *Sakuntala* in its original intention is undoubtedly a score . . . its character, and its awkward translation into Polish, strengthen the strangeness of the fable atmosphere. It permits a loose, flippant treatment of text." [202/86][82] A drama of the 4th or 5th century, *Sakuntala* first appeared in the West in 1789 in an English translation. Grotowski made extensive cuts, inserting fragments from ancient Indian ritual texts, including the *Kāma-Sūtra*. [83]

However, his most important breakthrough was his new awareness of the actor, which turned the actor into a key figure of intellect in the creative process. Together Grotowski and the actors created signs to express character and emotion which were similar to those conventionally used in Oriental theater. August Grodzicki quotes Grotowski in *Polish Theatre Directors*:

We prepared a production of Kalidasa's *Sakuntala*, where we explored the possibilities of creating signs in European theatre. Our intention was not devoid of mischievousness: we wanted to create a performance which would give an image of Oriental theatre, not authentic, but as Europeans imagine it to be. Thus, it was an ironic image of ideas about the East as something mysterious, puzzling, etc. But under the surface of those ironic explorations, which were directed against the audience, there was a hidden intention—a desire to discover a system of signs applicable in our theatre, in our civilization. This is what we did: the performance was in fact constructed out of little gestures and vocal signals. This proved fertile in the future: it was then that we had to introduce vocal exercises in our company, for it is not possible to create vocal signals without special training.[84]

Acting exercises at the newly named Theater-Laboratory of Thirteen Rows were systematically incorporated, exclusive of rehearsals, every day for four hours. The daily routine required great effort and included gymnastics, acrobatics, movement, mimicry and vocal exercises. Grotowski's actors achieved a consummate physical dexterity and excellent vocal abilities which became the main exponents of their work.

In the pamphlet that accompanied the production of *Sakuntala* was included two pages of "Viewing Regulations for the Spectators and in particular Critics" written by Ludwik Flaszen:

The text of the play, according to the usual practice of this theatre, has been used by the director as a canvas for his own contents and scenic invention In dealing with love the director has introduced a duality, the dialectics of extremes. In the course of the production there is repeated confrontation between the subliminal poetry of love and the plain prose of ritual injunctions, customary laws and the sexual code . . .

The performance is to some extent a visible demonstration of the sources from which the style of our theatre is drawn. For the theatre of the East is of ritual, where the performance constitutes a ceremony communicating with the spectator through conventional signs, and in which the division between stage and audience does not exist. The ritual theatre is the opposite of the theatre of illusion, in which there is portrayed on stage an ostensible picture of life, while the spectator views apart. All of Grotowski's productions carry into effect the principle of ritual, not only *Sakuntala*.

In view of its secular content, the ceremonial aspect of the performance should not be taken completely seriously. It's an invitation from the director to a game. Here we are—concretely—playing at oriental theatre. More precisely—pseudo-oriental. Through a convention of gesture, a way of talking, through the creation of a entire alphabet of conventional scenic signs, it is in some way aiming at a synthesis of oriental theatre (or rather a parody of the usual concepts of the theatre of the East). The director uses as material not only the forms of Eastern theatre—but also certain of the more common Indian notions. On the one hand life is shown as some kind of trance, a reverie, a dream; whilst on the other—as a conventional ceremony, the expression of human demeanor in conventional form, etiquette. . . . This brings about the double rhythm of the production. The phrase of "trance" is shown in immobility, composed of a grotesque adaptation of yoga postures. The "conventional" phase is movement ("graceful, formal"). . . . The interchange and succession of these phases creates the rhythm of the production. . . . The scenic word is treated very conventionally. It has to be not only the carrier of meaning and intention, the transmitter of the contents, but must also act with its own sonoric value, become sound, act artificially. . . . [101][85]

The following statement was written by Grotowski as marginal ideas while he was working on the text of *Sakuntala*:

The mythological patron of the old Indian theatre was Shiva, the cosmic Dancer, who, dancing, "gives birth" to all that is and who "shatters" all that is; and who "dances the whole." . . .

If I had to define our theatrical quest in one sentence, with one term, I would refer to the myth about the dance of Shiva. I would say: "We are playing at being Shiva. We are acting out Shiva." . . .

This is a dance of form, the pulsation of form, the fluid diffusion of the multiplicity of theatrical conventions, styles, acting traditions. It is the construction of opposites: intellectual play in spontaneity, seriousness in the grotesque, derision in pain. This is the dance of form which shatters all theatrical illusion, all "verisimilitude to life." . . .

The ancient Indian theatre, as the ancient Japanese and Greek theatres, was not a "presentation" of reality (that is a construction of illusions), but rather a dancing of reality (a false construction something on the order of a "rhythmic vision" that refers to reality). . . .

We do not demonstrate action to the viewer; we invite him . . . to take part in the "shamanism" in which the living, immediate presence of the viewer is part of the playacting. . . .

To all appearances, we "heal" ourselves with tautology:[86] the necessity of death explains itself through the necessity of death, the fate of man through the fate of man. But the tautology is seemingly apparent, because between the question and the confirmation, the perspective from which we see has changed. Now we try to see as if from the outside, as if from "all sides."

There is the mythological quotation: "Shiva says . . . I am without name, without form, and without action. . . . I am pulse, movement, rhythm" (Shiva-Gita).

The essence of the theater we are seeking is "pulse, movement, and rhythm." [87]

Premiering in December, and intended as folklore, *Sakuntala* was the beginning of Grotowski's artistic collaboration with the designer Jerzy Gurawski. In each production developed after this, through *The Constant Prince* in 1965, they sought a different spatial relationship between the actor and the spectator. Searching for ways to organize the ritual occurring between the actors and the audience, both according to Grotowski, "set off for an uncompromising conquest of space." [88]

They used the center stage in *Sakuntala*: the audience was located on two opposing platforms; the action took place between the platforms; and seated behind and above the audience were two yoga-commentators, who interpreted the action. The stage architecture was a large divided half hemisphere and a tall phallic pillar. "The scenography," wrote Flaszen in the program, "is in two phases: it associates the symbols of sleep (the Freudian shape in the center of the stage) with the symbols of childhood (the costumes were designed by children)." [89]

Even though the original had thirty-four roles, plus extras, Grotowski used only six actors in *Sakuntala* and assigned the other roles of hermits, courtiers and townspeople within the play to the audience. Lights came up on the audience when they participated in the action. The actors used conventional sacral sounds and liturgical allusions in contradiction to the everyday meaning of Kalidasa's language. As in last season's *Mystery-Bouffe*, there was no mechanical or recorded music used. Instead, the actors made rhythmic hand-clapping sounds against the body, echoes of footsteps, etc.

Grotowski spoke of the significance of this production in 1968:

. . . We wanted to create a performance which would give the idea of Eastern theatre—but rather

. . . We wanted to create a performance which would give the idea of Eastern theatre—but rather the kind that Europeans imagine. It was an ironic approach. But under the surface of the irony, aimed against the viewer, was a hidden intent: to discover a system of signs appropriate to our theater, our civilization. We did this through small vocal and gestural signs. This proved to be quite fertile ground in the future. We introduced voice training into our troupe, because it was impossible to create vocal signs without special preparation. The play was produced and it turned out to be a unique work in suggestiveness. But I saw that it was an ironic transposition of stereotypes, patterns. Each gesture, composed of a specially constructed ideogram, became what Stanislavsky called a "gesture pattern." This was not "I love you" with a hand over the heart, but in the end it came down to something similar. It became clear that this was not the way. . . . After *Sakuntala*, we undertook a search in the domain of organic reactions of people, in order to be able to structure these. This opened the door to the most fruitful adventure our group has had; that is, research in the field of acting. (Dialog [1969][90])

Seventeen years after it opened, Flaszen described the production more graphically than he had in the program:

. . . The room was designed so that the audience sat on two sides, with a construction on the floor in the middle. It was a round, organic shape, covered with sack-like fabric, and with a protruding column. It was simply a phallic symbol; but this was in 1961, before the sexual revolution (at least in Poland!) so it was a kind of joke; after all, it was a play about love. . . . The whole movement of this performance was, for the first time in our theatre, extremely precise and dance-like. Likewise the whole score of sound. The sense was rather parodistic and sometimes malicious. For example, the hero has great love-monologues. We had him stand on his head. At that time we were at a cross-roads. Something crystallized then—we were looking for a purer theatre where one could not tell content from form. We wanted pure form—movement. This change was of tremendous consequence. The need of exercise suddenly appeared: just in order to be able to do it! Our relation to the physical world was still uneasy as if eroticism or physicality was not acceptable. It was a primitive animalism, the result of the male-female schism. Important in Grotowski's perception of the world then was the non-acceptance and mockery of nature as something unpleasant. These were strong motives. [143/321][91]

Many of the elements which were to become, in time, significant features of Grotowski's philosophy of theater were already in evidence in this production of *Sakuntala*. For example: the fascination with ritual; the experiment with architectural space and the actor-spectator relationship; the insistence on the spectator's participation in some form; collaborating with the architect Gurawski, the abolition of the conventional end-stage; the exploration of audience-actor spacial relationships; the undertaking of investigation into a theatrical "system of signs"; the achievement of scenic effects through the actor's physiology, particularly in terms of utilizing natural and vocal sound effects; and the necessary actor training.

One contemporary reviewer, while praising the physical agility of the actors, concluded:

He has filled the little stage in the round with truly theatrical movement, a curious architecture of forms, colours, sounds, languages and songs. However, in the end this beautiful Indian tale of love reaches us rather in the form of a philosophical treatise, and intellectual game, it doesn't touch upon other regions of the theatrical experience. There is here too much of mathematics, of conceptualism, and too little poetry. [334/8][92]

In January, 1961, the Theater of 13 Rows went to Kraków, where it presented seven performances of *Sakuntala* and one performance of *Mystery Boufee*. While in Kraków, Grotowski gave an interview in which he talked about the progress of the Theater of Thirteen Rows:

Our troupe is somewhat conditioned now. Alternate jets of hot and cold water are supposed to strengthen, and that is the kind of shower our critics subject us to constantly. This is the end of our second year. Opole, which is ambitious but which doesn't have a snobbish cafe crowd to influence and pressure the theatre, is a good place for laboratory work. When we began, we had an average of eight viewers to a performance. It is a little better now, and the situation seems to be improving. We've always had good attendance at guest appearances in Poznań, Katowice, Kraków and Warsaw, even at the very beginning. . . . We assumed that progress in art demands not only an uncompromising attitude on the part of the artists, but, equally important, it demands work in preparing and educating one's audience. (Dziennik Opolski [1961])[93]

Still, while the stubborn battle for an audience was being waged, efforts to liquidate the Theatre of 13 Rows continued. a critic describes the events of the time:

It often seems a hopeless situation. The group was rescued by very good reviews from the central press and by the actions of a few social and Party activists. This had a decisive influence on the fate of the theatre. . . . It is understandable that Grotowski aroused uneasiness and opposition of those incapable of understanding what he was up to. He did not fit into the surrounding "landscape"; he was, like it or not, the grain that ferments. . . .

In spite of the two-year credit of confidence granted officially to the theatre, a few people engaged in the organization and evaluation of the cultural life of the city of Opole . . . indicated their impatience more and more frequently. . . . These individuals denied the theatre its right to exist. It was an experimental theatre and, therefore, elitist, even among the small circle of artists in Opole.

They used numbers as arguments, and numbers were Grotowski's worst allies in the early stages of his theatre. Nor did the label "elitist" arouse confidence, even though the point of the experiment was to create an elite theatre (and this sounds paradoxical) for a mass audience—a theatre in which the audience member would feel like a seriously considered intellectual partner.

As of February, 1961, the actors of the Theatre of 13 Rows have been playing to full houses. The work of educating the audience lasted about a year and a half in what seemed like conditions of absolute social isolation. This effort can be adequately gauged only when one takes into account that the theatre has no room for its administrative offices or scene shop. As a result, rehearsals are often at night. Their lilliputian dressing room has no warm water, and the actors have to spend their second year living in an unheated hall in the theatre during the winter. (B. Loebel, Odra [1962])[94]

The local opposition to Grotowski's work persuaded the famous poet, Wladyslaw Broniewski, to spend four days in May, 1961, in Opole to support the liquidation of the Theater of 13 Rows. The poet was told that the work was "gibberish," "a sham," and "charlatanism." After a performance of *Sakuntala* and the performance of a very brief montage of World War II images titled *The Tourists*, he discussed Meyerhold and the avant-garde in the theater for a long time with the young actors. He looked at their small, crowded "laboratory" and they took walks together on the streets of Opole while Broniewski recited his beautiful poems. This friendship lasted until his death, while the attempt to close down the theater using his influence ended in complete defeat. The poet's spontaneous reaction to what he had seen was first published in fragments in the programs for *Forefather's Eve* and *A Silesian Memoir*:

The Theatre of 13 Rows in Opole is a real phenomenon in Poland! Those people, that troupe, are apostles of a kind. Apostles of what? Of art with a capital "A." They speak wonderfully; they are agile; they know how to feel their way into the texture of human fate with their voices and bodies. They speak in an old fashioned way: they are good actors. I don't know which gestures were required for ancient India, but the gestures used by this theatre were convincing. . . . (Dialog [1974])[95]

The last production of the second season was the first work by the Theater of 13 Rows to be taken from the repertoire of great Polish national classics. *Dziady* (Forefathers' Eve) words by Adam Mickiewicz, premiered in June of 1961. It is the most frequently performed play from the Polish Romantic period. The title refers to an ancient folklore tradition of recalling the dead, which Zbigniew Osiński briefly describes:

A peasant ritual called Forefather's Eve takes place in a village chapel, in the depths of Lithuania, assembling all the main characters of the drama. Mickiewicz makes the folk ritual the basis of a dramatic structure. . . . The revolt of a romantic individual is demonstrated through a love which is rebellious and contrary to prevailing convention. Among phantoms and ghosts, Gustav appears as a silent vision, and later recounts the story of his childhood, love and personal life. [360/20][96]

In historical terms the production was significant for at least one other reason. Eugenio Barba, a student from Norway visiting Poland with a UNESCO grant, came to see one of the performances. He stayed for two years working as an assistant to Grotowski. The role he has played and still plays, familiarizing the rest of the World with the work of the company has been very significant.[97]

The plays popularity is due to its poetic, fragmented form—a vehicle for experimental work—and also because part of it was written by Michiewicz while he was in exile during the Partitions of Poland. The publication in 1823 of parts I, II and IV, led to his imprisonment for "spreading nonsensical Polish nationalism." In the Improvisation Scene the main character challenges, as Prometheus does, God's handling of his country's past and present. Claiming his patriotism as his "cross," he demands cosmic rule over Poland's future. In another section of the poetic drama, Poland is represented as a "Christ among the Nations of the Earth," an innocent victim crucified by foreign powers.[98]

In the program given out for the premiere on June 6, 1961, were Waldemar Krygier's sketches of rehearsals, Jerzy Gurawski's drawings of the setting, and the following text written by Ludwik Flaszen:

Why Forefather's Eve? Because it shows how theater is born of ritual. The fate of individuals plays itself out in full view of society, which actively participates in that fate: society summons, emanates, and judges. . . . We do not want to show a world separated from the spectator by the frame of the stage, but instead we want to create the world anew with the spectator. Surrounded by our mutual presence and aroused by our participation in a collective act, we will feel ourselves to be masters of our house.[99]

Grotowski seemed fascinated by the ritual aspects of the play when he said, "It is a question of a gathering which is subordinated to ritual: nothing is represented or shown, but we participate in a ceremonial which releases the collective unconscious." [15][100] Collaborating again with the architect Gurawski, he abolished the conventional stage, stating categorically that it would never be returned to by him and his company. Action took place behind spectators, in front of them, confronting them and their fellows across the way, in the same way they measured their reactions to the others in the normal course of their day. Flaszen said, "Directing a performance, unlike in the traditional theater, concerns two companies. The director constructs his performance not only of actors, but also of spectators. Theatrical ceremonial is created at the intersection of these two ensembles." [360/14][101] This was Grotowski's first attempt at a total spatial integration of actors and spectators, and the partial elimination of the intellectual division between them. The spectators, along with the actors, were participants of the ritual because the attitude of the actors invited the their mutual participation.

This kind of active involvement of the audience was not repeated until much later, with the earliest versions of *Apocalypsis Cum Figuris*, which also explored more deeply than in *Dziady* certain aspects of "play." Grotowski said in an interview with Falkowski:

We want to expose the relationship between ritual and play: the actors begin the magic lore as a kind of entertainment. From amongst the circle of spectators and actors they "number out"—according to the Mickiewicz text—the first leader of the chorus. . . . This game grows into something sacral, the participants call up the dead and immediately take their parts. [15][102]

In the same interview Grotowski explained why Mickiewicz's work fascinated him and outlined the play's main assumptions:

First of all, sorcery. If *Forefather's Eve* is a ritual drama, then we draw very literal conclusions: we arrange the collectivity, which is not divided into viewers and actors but rather into participants of the first and second order. The point is to have a collectivity subordinated to the rigors of ritual. . . .

Secondly, . . . the actors began the sorcery with something like a game. They designate the first "leader of the chorus" (a spirit who is later Konrad) from the circle of viewers and actors. This game grows into something sacred as the participants summon the dead and then act out their roles. Taking an unsuspecting person from the audience (as with the shepherdess pursued by a spirit) is intended as a return to ritual theatre.

Thirdly, the Great Improvisation. This section of *Forefathers' Eve* is normally treated as a great metaphysical revolt full of pathos and as an individual struggle with God. This seemed good material to demonstrate the tragic and naive qualities of saviors, their Don Quixoticism. . . .

Gustav-Konrad's monologue was made similar to the Stations of the Cross. He moves from viewer to viewer, like Christ. . . . His pain is supposed to be authentic, his mission of salvation sincere, even full of tragedy; but his reactions are naive, close to a childish drama of incapacity. The point is to construct a specific theatrical dialect: of ritual and play, the tragic and the grotesque.

We concentrate the meaning of the production in the Great Improvisation. In a narrow sense, one could talk about how suffering gives birth to the supernatural world or how lone rebellion encompassing everything is hopeless. In a broader and more important sense, one could identify the suffering with the object of our constant searching—what Wladyslaw Broniewski has described as our "feeling our way into the texture of human fate with our voices and bodies." (Interview, J. Falkowski, *Współczesność* [1961])[103]

According to Kumiega, there were other elements of the production which maintained this theme of "play." Characters wore bedspreads, quilts or window curtains in place of romantic cloaks and dresses, like children in a game of "make-believe." The aspects of a theatrical dialectic that Grotowski was striving for in this production were "play and ceremonial, tragedy and the grotesque, quixoticry and `sacrosanctity.'"[104]

Later she goes on:

Such a handling of this most sacred of national dramas naturally provoked some confusion and hostility. Spectators and critics were well aware of the political implications contained in the representation of the main character, Konrad, moving in mystical pride among the spectators and weighed down by a broom. But Barba explained that "the artificiality which Grotowski strives for must stem from reality, from the organic necessity of the movement or the intentions." He refers to one instance from *Dziady*: "In the Improvisation . . . Gustav-Konrad is exhausted and drips with sweat. He does not try to hide it. His gestures suggest that it is the blood Christ sweated." [115/163][105]

The physical action accompanying this intellectual, dialectical approach was organically developed by physical and vocal training exercises prior to the performance. The sub-title and epigraph for the performance were the Priest's words from the text:

This blasphemous ritual, full of sorcery

Confirms our people in their deepest ignorance;

This is the source of their tales and superstitions

About night spirits, vampires, and magic.

(Forefathers' Eve, Part IV)

The "dialectic of apotheosis and derision"—borrowed from the critic T. Kudliński, who had attended all of Grotowski's productions since *The Chairs* in 1957—was a heritage of both his Marxism and his interest in Eastern philosophies. In the following few years this principle came to be applied in the training and performance techniques of Grotowski's actors making their work recognized as truly innovative.[106]

Forefather's Eve and Slowacki's *Kordian*, developed immediately after, led to the staging of Wyspiański's *Akropolis*. The scene in which spirits are summoned and Gustav-Konrad is designated as savior echoes the scene in *Apocalypsis cum figuris* in which the Dark One or Simpleton is selected. With his production of *Forefathers' Eve* Grotowski began, as Flaszen later said, "a steady wandering over the great expanse of (Polish) romanticism." [107]

In mid-November, after the premiere of *The Idiot* on October 22, 1961, a performance developed and directed by Waldemar Krygier, the group gave a number of performances in Wrocław of both *Forefathers' Eve* and *The Idiot*. By the close of the year, Flaszen's important descriptive essay, "The Theatre of 13 Rows," was published in both French and English in *The Theatre in Poland*, thus bringing the work of the troupe to recognition outside its national boundaries.

The first play of the third season at Opole opened to the public on February 13, 1962. *Kordian*, by the great Polish Romantic poet, Juliusz Slowacki, was an indication that Grotowski's early concepts concerning ritual, myth and collective participation were beginning to jell, giving a specific direction to the work of his company. It had been eight months since the premiere of *Dziady* and the group was becoming more focussed and stringent in their research. This development was acknowledged by a change of the group's name to the Laboratory Theater of Thirteen Rows (*Teatr Laboratorium 13 Rzędów*).

In one of the scenes of Juliusz Slowacki's early nineteenth century play, *Kordian* (III, vi), the hero and the title character is committed to a mental institution as a sacrifice for the sufferings of his people and homeland. Grotowski's entire production took place in this setting: a "hospital for the mentally ill." It is worthwhile noting that Grotowski's production predated by a number of years both the writing and first production of Peter Weiss' *Marat/Sade*.

Grotowski altered and abridged Slowacki's original text. Wrote Ludwik Flaszen:

The play is thought of as a mutual penetration, a mutual play of reality and fiction. The action is played out on three levels. The theatre is reality in a literal sense: there is the auditorium into which the audience comes to see the play. The first level of fiction is constructed on that theatrical reality: the role of psychiatric patients is thrust on every member of the audience, not just the actors. Another layer of fiction then is constructed on the hospital reality: the actions of *Kordian* become the collective hallucinations of all the people who are ill. (*Pamiętnik Teatralny* [1964])[108]

The audience sat on metal beds placed in three different locations and were treated as patients in a hospital ward. The beds also served as locations for important actions by the performers, who played on the beds as acrobats. Costumes were hospital gowns and uniforms, and props were literal: a scalpel, a straight-jacket, bowls, mugs, towels. There were also objects that looked like they were out of the prop room of another theater: a crown for the Czar, a tiara for the Pope, etc. Sometimes the audience were forced to act. For instance, the Doctor hummed a song and forced all the actors and viewers to sing along. The disobedient were sought out and threatened with a cane. This, however, was the last production of of the Theater of 13 Rows in which the viewer was urged to participate by "provoking him into specific types of behavior, movement, song, verbal replies, etc." (Grotowski, Dialog [1969])[109]

Although the critic Jerzy Kwiatkowski saw Kordian as "an unusual artistic phenomenon, . . . one of the most interesting in the period after 1956, . . ." seeing a great chance for this particular theater "to distinguish itself from the commonplace," he was opposed to the way they attempted to involve the spectator in the performance. "Let us leave the role of passive viewer to the audience member, and let us not try to change him into the resolute boy in the audience of a puppet show or into the terrified stranger, tearing himself from the arms of a beautiful chorus girl in a Parisian music hall." (Współczesność [1952])[110]

At the end of July, Grotowski went to Helsinki for the 8th World Youth and Student Festival as part of the Polish delegation, where he addressed an international public concerning the work of his small, experimental company. Afterward, articles began to appear in Denmark, Finland, France, Spain, Norway, Rumania, Switzerland, Sweden, Hungary, etc. One of the participants of the festival was the French drama critic, Madame Raymonde Temkine, the author of one of the first books to be written about Grotowski, whom I have quoted throughout this paper. Temkine writes in Grotowski, "I gathered that he belonged to the avant-garde, and was so far ahead of the theatre I knew that I did not understand what he told me of his There were many hours of conversation and, since then, the dialogue has never ceased." [111] When he returned from Helsinki, Grotowski spent a month in the People's Republic of China as a delegate of Theater Affairs from the Polish Ministry of Art and Culture. While in China, Grotowski made a number of contacts with contemporary Chinese theater artists and studied the style, form, and traditions of Chinese theater.

Less than a month after his return to Opole, on October 10, 1962, the first version of Grotowski's Akropolis premiered. Based on Stanislaw Wyspiański's play of 1904, designed by Józef Szajna and with Eugenio Barba as Assistant Director, it was the most highly stylized of all Grotowski's staged works so far. It remained in the repertory for almost eight years (in five different versions) and toured internationally. Stefan Bratkowski published a description of Grotowski and one of the later performances:

He is heavysset and has the full face of a well-fed only son. His beard is sparse like that of a boy; his hair is parted on one side, and he has the tired, peering eyes of someone who is near-sighted. Glasses. A fashionable coat and sloppy shoes which seem ready to fall off his feet. He doesn't seem to notice.

Until now, he has been: an actor, a journalist, a leader in the youth movement, a lecturer on Hindu and Chinese philosophy, a rally heckler, and the youngest professor in the higher schools of acting. He is in charge of something called a "laboratory theatre," which, outside of Poland, is the most highly acclaimed theatre of Europe.

Some have called him a charlatan; others consider him the most interesting innovator of the Polish stage if not the most interesting theatre innovator in the entire world. There is something of the hypnotist in him and something of the street urchin who loves mischief. When he explains his

viewpoint to someone, he does so with the patience and understanding of a teacher explaining the mysteries of 2 x 2 to an undeveloped child. When he laughs, you detect a note of delight in pulling off a good joke. The joke might be taking place in such lofty regions of humor that the butt of it often doesn't realize until the end what his own role has been. On the other hand, Grotowski can also create a joke at his own expense. When he was not able to teach his actors psychic concentration before the performance, he imposed a half-hour mandatory silence before each showing. He too had to adhere to the ruling. . . .

Wyspiański's play is performed in a concentration camp setting. Now Grotowski has made a duality of the entire classical repertory in his workshop. . . . Akropolis is a play of mystical illusions and hopes, so Grotowski sunders their meaning and packs everything into a concentration camp. The final coming of the Savior will mean liberation by way of an Auschwitz oven! (Podróż na peyferie [1965])[112]

Flaszen commented on the new project of the Laboratory Theater of 13 Rows as follows:

The action of Wyspiański's play takes place on Wawel Hill [in Kraków], which is to Poles what the Athenian Acropolis is to the whole of Europe. During the Easter Sunday vigil, figures step out of the tapestries in order to re-enact great myths, ancient tales, and Bible stories: the Trojan War, Paris and Helen, Jacob's battle with the Angel, Jacob and Esau, and the Resurrection. Grotowski sees Akropolis as the graveyard of European and Polish civilization, the sum of its inspiration and motifs. And that graveyard of tradition converges with the graveyard of peoples generally and European culture in our century, with the hum of the "civilization of ovens," and with the reality of the extermination camps. (Komentarz do przedstawienia [1962])[113]

Of course the concept was Grotowski's. His inspiration was from the concentration camp stories of the writer and former inmate of Auschwitz, Tadeusz Borowski, who died prematurely, and from whom Grotowski borrowed the epitaph for his production:

After us
All that will remain is a heap of scrap metal
And the empty, jeering laughter of generations.[114]

Wyspiański's play ends with the Resurrection and apotheosis of Christ. Grotowski's production closes with a procession of dancing inmates who carry a dummy corpse of Christ triumphantly. The corpse is their Savior and a symbol of their desperate hope. One by one they disappear into the crematorium oven, a dark box in the center of the space.

Akropolis was a final step toward what later came to be called "poor Theater." According to Flaszen:

The performance was based on a principle of strict self-sufficiency. The main tenet is: don't introduce anything into the action not there from the beginning. There are these people and a certain number of objects collected in the performance space. This must be sufficient for all circumstances and situations in the play, the sound and decor, the time and space. . . . The poor theatre means to use the least number of objects to obtain maximum effect. (Pamiętnik Teatralny [1964])[115]

Following this production, and as a result of the curiosity that Grotowski aroused during his visit to Helsinki, there began a steady increase in the attention from the West focused upon the small experimental group in Opole. More students began to arrive for periods of apprenticeship, articles appeared in the Western press and the first tentative steps were taken towards making the Grotowski's work accessible outside Poland. Nevertheless, at home there was a genuine hostility surrounding the Theater Laboratory of Thirteen Rows, which continued until their move to Wrocław on January 1, 1965. An article in a local paper published at the beginning of 1963 reported:

The group is working in very difficult conditions. Their subsidy does not cover the renovations and improvements necessary for the work. And the difficult working conditions are matched by the difficult living conditions of the members of the group. . . . At this moment the Theatre of Thirteen Rows receives the lowest subsidy in the country for its activity. It does not meet the needs of the theatre in the sense of securing its harmonious activity . . . [308/110][116]

The turning point of the fortunes of the Laboratory Theater also occurred in 1963. In December of the previous year the company had begun rehearsals for Christopher Marlowe's *The Tragical History of Dr. Faustus* which crystallized Grotowski's system of training his actors. Most of them remember this time because they developed the exercises for which they became known, as opposed to the techniques they used in a particular production (the vocal work of Sakantala or the "facial masks" techniques of Akropolis). Individual actors, encouraged by Grotowski, began to focus on those areas of training for which they had a natural disposition or particular knowledge, and evolved their own specialized fields. This knowledge and the exercises that developed, were passed on first to the ensemble and later, in workshops, to students.

Dr. Faustus was also significant for its public and critical reception. It created a painful dichotomy of recognition and eventually adulation from outside its own country, particularly the West, and indifference or hostility (with notable exceptions) from the Polish theatrical community and the public. According to Osiński there appeared, after the premiere of *Dr. Faustus*, about one hundred reviews, essays and studies in Western publications.[117] ". . . all this was in glaring contrast to its reception in its own country. The Opole press passed over it in complete silence, and no reasonable treatment appeared in any Polish periodical." [361/117][118]

A Western critic, Michael Kustow, saw in the "impudent, even irreverent staging" of *Doctor Faustus*, "the most complete realization and the most upsetting . . . of Artaud's dreams." "How can we avoid drawing Artaud and Grotowski together as soon as, knowing *The Theatre and Its Double*, we find ourselves confronted with the repertory of the Laboratory Theater?" This upsetting realization came to Raymonde Temkine, she tells us in *Grotowski*, as she watched *Doctor Faustus*, *The Constant Prince*, and *Akropolis*. "If I had not had the time to become friendly with Grotowski and talk with him, I would doubtless have thought that he had Artaud at his bedside when he elaborated his conception of theater and that he had based his works on these dreams. This was not so, but what a meeting of the minds." [119]

Grotowski claims to have known neither of the Théâtre Alfred Jarry, co-founded by Antonin Artaud and Roger Vitrac in 1927, nor of Artaud's writings. He tells Temkine that he only learned of the existence of Artaud after his death, when Grotowski was already the director of the Laboratory Theater, from a short excerpt of his writing published in 1960 in the Polish magazine *Dialog*. The article was pointed out to him by the dean of the company, Zygmunt Molik, who was struck with the similarities of terminology used by Grotowski and Artaud—a Frenchman almost unknown in Poland. (The first production of *Akropolis* was not until 1962, so we can assume he at least felt supported in his work by the call of the prophet, Artaud, after reading the article.) As for *Theatre and Its Double*, Temkine tells us he read it in 1964. "The book which was being re-edited, had been impossible to find: I quickly sent him a copy." [120]

Grotowski says he ". . . would rather be considered as indebted to his compatriot, S.I. Witkiewicz (pseudonym Witkacy) who developed theories close to Artaud, a generation before, and committed suicide in 1939." He also told Temkine that he "owed to Witkiewicz an idea that he considered essential: the theater can be a religion without religion." [121]

The fact that *Dr. Faustus* was the first of Grotowski's productions to be seen by many influential members of the Western theatrical world was due to particularly fortuitous circumstances. From June 8 - 15, 1963, the Tenth Congress of the International Theater Institute was convened in

Warsaw. The participants were treated during this period to a full program of the theatrical events taking place in Warsaw, but the Laboratory Theater was playing Dr. Faustus in Łódź. It was Eugenio Barba's energy and determination that turned this unfortunate combination into Grotowski's advantage. Barba attended the Congress in Warsaw. According to an English critic from The Times who was present, he drew attention to the theories being developed by Grotowski by speaking on the merits of the idea that actors only need to be virtuosos of the voice and body. [420][122] Subsequently, Barba persuaded a group of those attending the Congress to visit Łódź by private car, which he paid for, to see Dr. Faustus. The following day, according to Alan Seymour who was at the Congress, there were "controversial and heated" reports, which interested a large enough number of delegates to visit Łódź by bus to see the company's next performance. [387/33][123]

During the following year, 1964, less time was being devoted to the preparation of a repertory as the company continued to turn their attention to research and experiment. Of at least four major productions planned for the 1963-1964 season, only Hamlet received as much as an "open rehearsal." Of this period Osiński says:

The Hamlet Study was prepared in exceptionally difficult circumstances. The Institute's future fate was unsure. The directors and actors had, for instance, no guarantee that they would receive a salary the following month. Some quite simply could not withstand this situation psychologically and left the Group. Only thanks to the heroic obduracy of Grotowski, who infected his colleagues with his own attitude, did there emerge finally, after several months of extraordinarily intensive and feverish work, a public presentation of a "rehearsal" on 17 March. [361/120][124]

Hamlet Study was something of a revelation for the group. It was performed only twenty times to a total audience of 630 and shown only in Opole, since the group, owing to the financial circumstances, had to abide by an administrative ruling that forbade them to tour with its productions. Without funds, the company could not print its usual extended Materials-Discussions to accompany the premiere. There were only two small flyers. One of them listed the cast and the other contained Flaszen's commentary. No photographs of the performance were taken, since the group lacked funds even to do that. It was these circumstances, and the growing interest abroad in the creative research of the Laboratory Theater, that critic Józef Kelera made the following direct appeal to Wrocław authorities:

Lately the troupe has been having serious difficulties, which jeopardize the existence of this unique and marvelous institution. More and more critics on several continents are writing in superlatives about this group. Many creative theatrical artists come from various European countries to gain practical experience. The city of Opole, the quiet corner and island of genuinely industrious laboratory work for many years has stopped being the appropriate base for this pioneering theatrical enterprise. I also know there is a realistic chance of moving the group to Wrocław.

Grotowski's troupe is all of ten people, including the artistic and literary directors. They do not need much. They have all been through a rough period, making many sacrifices, but they still have a lot of enthusiasm. But it is not inexhaustible. This opportunity may not come again.

I turn to the Presidium of the Wrocław People's Council and to the Cultural Section with this ardent appeal: Do not delay! Do not bypass this opportunity! March, 1964[125]

On December 28, 1964, five days before the fact, Grotowski wrote the following to the Osiński:

We have been installing ourselves in Wrocław since January 2. . . . Our move is an event ripe with possibilities (good and bad) and almost like a biblical exodus.

As far as exercises and rehearsals go, we are working on our new phase (which began in Opole). As far as living conditions go, they are rather makeshift for now. . . . For the time being, we are residing in the Town Hall.[126]

It was not until January 6, 1965, that there was notice of the group's move to Wrocław in *Trybuna Opolska*, the official newspaper of Opole. It was the first and last time anything was mentioned by the local press about the move of the Theater Laboratory of 13 Rows:

The experimental Laboratory Theatre, founded a few years ago in Opole and supported by local artist's groups, has changed its home base, and, as of the first of January, is residing in Wrocław.

As sad as it is for us to part with this unique institution, which has made our city famous not just in Poland but abroad, the theatre's decision to the capital of Lower Silesia, a city of half a million people, seems a good one. Opole, with its population of sixty thousand, could not assure Grotowski's theatre, which had one to two premieres annually, of enough attendance. The interesting but difficult worlds of the Theatre of 13 Rows could not attract wider interest. For a long time, the theatre had been counting on audiences in larger cities it visited: Łódź, Kraków, Poznań and Wrocław.

The lack of resonance in Opole deprived Grotowski's theatre of a reason to be here in its home city. Considering the circumstances, further support and subsidy of the theatre would have had no rational basis.

We hope that the troupe from 13 Rows, which has had enough time to get attached to Opole and its residents, will visit us from time to time with its new productions, because it does leave behind perhaps a modest but faithful group of well-wishers.[127]

Right after the theater left Opole, the black auditorium on the town square was repainted and turned into a coffeehouse. The theater's identification plate was smashed with hammers. One other sign which hung over the doors leading to the theater auditorium was also destroyed. On it had been a quotation from the "dark" Heraclitus of Ephesus: "Opposition brings concord. Out of discord comes the fairest harmony." [128]

Finally, the uncertainty of the future, fueled by the critics in Poland, was resolved in a highly advantageous way for all concerned. The proposition had been advanced and agreed upon in the summer of 1964, that the Laboratory Theater should move from the provincial town of Opole, considered "unsuitable as an environment for such shocking research" [361/124][129] and take up residence in Wrocław, a large industrial and university town in the East of Poland. In a discussion between the directors of the Wrocław theaters published in 1965, Grotowski admitted to benefitting from the lack of pressure in Opole during the early stages of his work with his ensemble, but now welcomed the move to an academic center such as Wrocław. There they could make contacts in specialized fields and explore contemporary developments in peripheral areas such as cultural anthropology, psychology, psycho-analysis and physiology. [21/32][130]

The fire that his early critics and supporters sensed in the head of the student Grotowski had ignited his Laboratory Theater ensemble while in the little town of Opole. Their work together soon exploded onto the World stage with *Akropolis* and *The Constant Prince*. What followed immediately afterward is a benchmark in World theater history.

[1] Jennifer Kumiega. *The Theatre of Grotowski*, (London and New York: Methuen, 1985), p. 4.

[2] Timothy Wiles. *The Theater Event, Modern Theories of Performance* (Chicago & London: University of Chicago Press, 1980), p. 113.

[1] Jennifer Kumiega. *The Theatre of Grotowski*, (London and New York: Methuen, 1985), p. 4.

[2] Timothy Wiles. *The Theater Event, Modern Theories of Performance* (Chicago & London: University of Chicago Press, 1980), p. 113.

[3] Kumiega, p. 4.

[4] Raymonde Temkine. *Grotowski*, trans. Alex Szogyl, (New York: Avon Books, 1972), p. 47.

[5] Temkine, p. 47.

[6] Zbigniew Osiński. *Grotowski and His Laboratory*, trans. Lillian Vallee and Robert Findlay, (New York: PAJ Publications [A Division of Performing Arts Journal, Inc.], 1986), p. 13.

[7] Osiński, p. 13.

[8] Temkine, p. 48.

[9] Temkine, p. 48.

[10] Osiński, pp. 25-26.

[11] Temkine, p. 48.

[12] Osiński, p. 14.

[13] Osiński, p. 14.

[14] Osiński, p. 14.

[15] Osiński, p. 15.

[16] Osiński, p. 15.

[17] Osiński, p. 15.

[18] Osiński, p. 15.

[19] Osiński, p. 15.

[20] Osiński, pp. 15-16.

[21] Osiński, p. 16.

[22] Osiński, pp. 16-17.

[23] Osiński, p. 17.

[24] Temkine, p. 49.

[25] Osiński, p. 17.

[26] Osiński, pp. 17-18.

[27] Osiński, p. 18.

[28] Temkine, p. 50.

[29] Temkine, p. 49.

[30] Osiński, p. 18.

[31] Temkine, p. 138.

[32] Osiński, p. 18.

[33] Temkine, p. 50.

[34] Kumiega, p. 10.

[35] Kumiega, p. 5.

[36] Kumiega, p. 5.

[37] Osiński, p. 18.

[38] Osiński, p. 19.

[39] Osiński, p. 20.

[40] Osiński, p. 20.

[41] Osiński, p. 20.

[42] Kumiega, p. 6.

[42] Kumiega, p. 6.

[43] Kumiega, p. 6.

[44] Osiński, p. 22.

[45] Jerzy Grotowski, "Towards a Poor Theatre," Towards a Poor Theatre, ed. Eugenio Barba, (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1968), p. 16.

[46] Osiński, pp. 22-23.

[47] Defined by Webster's New World Dictionary of the American Language as: any of a group of late Vedic metaphysical treatises dealing with man in relation to the universe.

[48] Kumiega, p. 6.

[49] Osiński, p. 24.

[50] Osiński, p. 26.

[51] Kumiega, p. 7.

[52] Osiński, p. 24.

[53] Osiński, p.24.

[54] Osiński, p. 24.

[55] Osiński, p. 25.

[56] Osiński, pp. 25-26.

[57] Osiński, pp. 26-27.

[58] Osiński, p. 27.

[59] Osiński, p. 27.

[60] Osiński, p. 27.

[61] Grotowski, pp.23-24.

[62] Osiński, p. 30.

[63] Osiński, pp. 30-31.

[64] Osiński, p. 31.

[65] Osiński, p. 29-30.

[66] Kumiega, p. 7.

[67] Kumiega, pp. 7-8.

[68] Osiński, p. 38.

[69] Kumiega, p. 8.

[70] Kumiega, p. 8.

[71] Kumiega, p. 7.

[72] Temkine, pp. 18-19.

[73] Kumiega, p. 11.

[74] Kumiega, p. 12.

[75] Kumiega, p. 12.

[76] Kumiega, p. 13.

[77] Osiński, p. 38.

[78] Kumiega, p. 13.

[79] Kumiega, p. 13.

[80] Kumiega, pp. 13-14.

[81] Kumiega, p. 14.

[82] Kumiega, p. 29.

[83] Kumiega, p. 29.

[84] August Grodzicki. Polish Theatre Directors, (Warsaw: Interpress Publishers, 1979), p. 46.

[85] Kumiega, pp. 29-30.

[86] The needless repetition of an idea in a different word, phrase or sentence; redundancy; pleonasm; the use of more words than are necessary; (Ex.: "necessary essentials") or, an instance of such repetition.

[87] Osiński, pp. 49-50.

[88] Osiński, p. 50.

[89] Osiński, p. 50.

[90] Osiński, p. 51.

[91] Kumiega, p. 31.

[92] Kumiega, p. 32.

[93] Osiński, pp. 51-52.

[94] Osiński, p. 52.

[95] Osiński, p. 53.

[96] Kumiega, p. 33.

[97] Kumiega, p. 15.

[98] Kumiega, p. 33.

[99] Osiński, pp. 53-54.

[100] Kumiega, p. 36.

[101] Kumiega, p. 36.

[102] Kumiega, p. 37.

[103] Osiński, p. 54.

[104] Kumiega, p. 38.

[105] Kumiega, p. 38.

[106] Kumiega, p. 38.

[107] Osiński, p. 62.

[108] Osiński, p. 63.

[109] Osiński, p. 63.

[110] Osiński, p. 65.

[111] Temkine, p. 38.

[112] Osiński, p. 66.

[113] Osiński, p. 67.

[114] Osiński, p. 68.

[115] Osiński, p. 68.

[116] Kumiega, p. 40.

[117] Osiński, p. 76.

[118] Kumiega, p. 42.

[119] Temkine, pp. 143-44.

[120] Temkine, p. 144.

[121] Temkine, p. 145.

[122] Kumiega, p. 42.

[123] Kumiega, p. 42.

[124] Kumiega, p. 43.

[125] Osiński, p. 80.

[126] Osiński, p. 83.

[127] Osiński, pp. 81-82.

[128] Osiński, p. 82.

[129] Kumiega, p. 43.

[130] Kumiega, p. 43.