

MEETING WITH THE THEATRE OF DEATH

Topic: *Meeting With The Theatre Of Death*

Dates: 7 – 16 December, 2012 (open show)

Place: Cricoteka, no. 5 Kanonicza Street, Krakow

Run by: Bogdan Renczyński

Limit of participants: 14

The purpose of this workshop is a creative encounter with theatre language and work method of Tadeusz Kantor through passing on the reference points for personal work on looking into the unique world of The Theatre of Death. The workshop will be mainly based on the dynamics of acting with text and object, connected to a particular kind of stage presence suggested by Tadeusz Kantor. The foundation of this theatre lay in the renunciation of the illusory reproduction and representation.

Tadeusz Kantor appropriated Reality, 'he (annexes it) entraps it'. In order to approach his method, we will start with negation of traditional form and conventional expression. What is important is the emphasis on the abstract value of behaviour, manipulation of reality and unbiased application of reality. The workshop is divided into six part, each consists of improvisations and etudes.

Levels of lectures and workshops:

Creative act as a shared value for the individual and the audience.

State of freedom of the actor-creator in the presence of the audience.

The art of freedom inspite of all.

The stage and the audience as theatre space communicating human good.

PART 1

Animation of 'ready object'.

The participants will be required to find a 'ready object' from the 'reality of the lowest rank' i.e. 'devoid of its usefulness', its primary (original) meaning.

In order to be applied at the moment of stage creation, the object – devoid of its original expression – may enter the field of dynamic tensions, become an object of manipulation for the actor.

The object is the actor's partner, an opponent standing up to him and also – as Tadeusz Kantor used to say – 'its appearance complies with my ever-deepening conviction that it is possible to express *life* in art only through the *absence of life*, through an appeal to DEATH, through APPEARANCES, through EMPTINESS and the lack of a MESSAGE.' (Tadeusz Kantor 'The Theatre of Death')

PART 2

Playing with text.

During the workshop we will be working with the text by Tadeusz Kantor 'Emballages' from the notes for the last performance 'Today Is My Birthday'.

Emballage –

when we want to send
something important,
something significant,
and something private.

Emballage –

when we want to shelter
and protect,
to escape the passage of time.

Emballage –

when we want to hide something
deeply.

EMBALLAGE –

must be isolated,
protected from trespassing,
ignorance,
and vulgarity.

Emballage

Emballage

Emballage.

(1964)

Emballage for the actor is his role, his body, but also a 'stranger' who an actor keeps inside (his own dead actor). Actor needs to permanently fight with his part, search for it inside himself, not to loose and never let wrap himself on stage. He needs to confront themselves and never leave none of them.

Emballage lets an actor hide and it can also defeat actor's individuality. It protects and destroys. Isolated and releases.

Tadeusz Kantor did not approach creating a performance as directing literary work but as initiating a creative process, creating a stage reality, playing with various theatre means. Tadeusz Kantor considers text as a 'ready object' which serves him as a 'partner in the play' - as he says 'I don't play Witkiewicz, I play with Witkiewicz'. The text becomes the sum of meanings, the essence, the concrete reality.

PART 3

'The actor's presence'.

The actor's challenge lies in incorporating or identification with the drama characters into Tadeusz Kantor's reality. He takes the role away from the actor as well as his right to express (interpretation), he brings him into the process, into practice. The actor accompanies the Role (the character) but does not incorporate it. By avoiding imitation, illusion and psychology, the actor becomes an entity in this particular reality and presence.

The actor is a player who plays with the text, moves away and then back to it, leaves it and then returns, takes away its anecdotal nature in order to discover (show) its abstract concreteness (the reality).

In this way the process of creation includes predisposition (destiny) characteristic of the actor. It emphasizes the personality of the Actor (as a person, a character).

What is most important for him is the 'creative activity'.

'... the body of an actor and his movement ought to interpret each form and each line of the stage structure...' (Independent Theatre, 1942-1944)

'... Movement turns into another movement, from one person to another. In that way an abstract composition of movement is formed...'

'On this uncompromising path the actor needs to offer his ridiculousness, his poverty and even his dignity and appear helpless, without no mask for his protection.

The realisation of the impossible is more than a process – it is an act of imagination...' (Zero Theatre Manifesto).

PART 4

Actor on the stage in the future-creative tense.

The state of actor is:

- the continuous impossible
- the continuous absent
- the continuous future
- the state of anticipation.

PART 5

Actor in the absent tense. In the future, impossible in its risk of 'failure'. Playing lack of character or, in fact, the absence becomes the ideal impossibility for an actor, this ideal 'impossible'. Yearning for presence yet not performing it opens for the actor the creative states of the only stage feeling – the feeling of 'the possible' and 'the attainable'.

'MANNEQUINS also have their own version of TRANSGRESSION. The existence of these creatures, shaped in man's image almost *godlessly*, in an illegal fashion, is the result of heretical dealings, a manifestation of the Dark, Nocturnal, Rebellious side of human activity. Of Crimes and Traces of Death as sources of recognition'.

PART 6

State of inspiration.

Before the 'play',
before the 'work of art',
before the character
before the audience.

The actor 'plays'. He 'is' in Kantor's sensibility and does not play death but 'is death'. A 'dead figure', in his imagination.

The actor plays death with his imagination, i.e. he does not play in Kantor's imagination but with His imagination. And this is 'the impossible'. This boundary is the attempt at playing the shadow of death.

Bogdan Renczyński

BOGDAN RENCZYŃSKI

An actor of the Cricot 2 Theatre from 1982 to 1992, and later of Compagnie du Singulier Theatre from 1994 to 1996 and MIST Theatre from 1996 to 1997. He performed in Tadeusz Kantor's productions *The Dead Class*, *Let the Artists Die*, *Wielopole Wielopole*, *I Shall Never Return*, and *Today Is My Birthday*.

Since 1980, he has been working at the Centre for Documentation of the Art of Tadeusz Kantor 'Cricoteka' in Krakow. A curator of numerous exhibitions of Tadeusz Kantor's work in Poland and abroad. Initiator and co-founder of the Parisian Association *Le Retour d'Ulysse* (educational activities: organisation of seminars and drama workshops). Director of *What Shall We Do With the Cello* by Matei Vişniec with the Théâtre des Collines in Etoile (France, 2007), and *Rebecca, My Mother* at the Théâtre du Radeau in Le Mans (France, 2010). Conducted theatre workshops in Cartoucherie (Association de Recherche des Traditions de l'Acteur, 2010), Auvergne (Ferme de Trielle, 2008), Gent (École des Beaux-Arts KASK, 2008) and Lyon (Théâtre des Asphodèles, 2006).



Tadeusz Kantor, *I Shall Never Return*, Cricot 2 Theatre, 1988