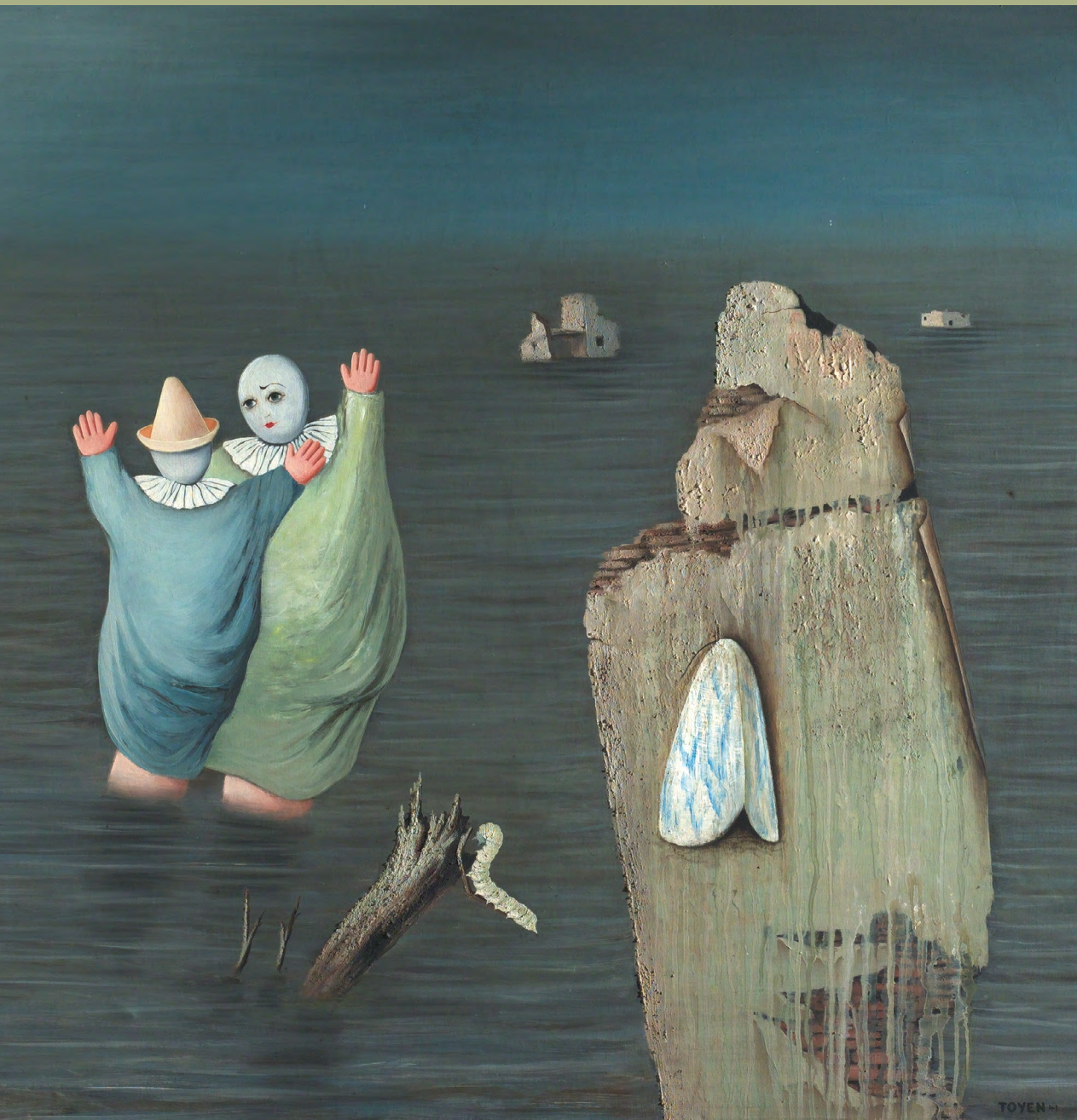
THEATRE THEORY READER
PRAGUE SCHOOL WRITINGS

EDITED BY
DAVID DROZD,
TOMÁŠ KAČER
AND DON SPARLING

KAROLINUM



Theatre Theory Reader
Prague School Writings

Edited by David Drozd, Tomáš Kačer and Don Sparling

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The original manuscript was reviewed by Prof. Veronika Ambros (University of Toronto) and Prof. Yana Meerzon (University of Ottawa).

Published by Charles University
Karolinum Press
Layout by Jan Šerých
Typeset by Karolinum Press
First English edition

This book is published as part of the research project *Czech Structuralist Thought on Theatre: Context and Potency* (Český divadelní strukturalismus: souvislosti a potenciál; 2011–2015), which is financed with funds from GAČR (the Czech Science Foundation), No. P409/11/1082.

ISBN 978-80-246-3578-1
ISBN 978-80-246-3579-8 (pdf)

Charles University
Karolinum Press 2016

www.karolinum.cz
ebooks@karolinum.cz

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This book owes its existence to the urgings of Veronika Ambros (University of Toronto) and Eva Stehlíková (Masaryk University), both of whom, *firstly*, have always asserted that the intellectual legacy of the Prague School theatre writings is a cultural treasure that ought to be cultivated and promoted world-wide, and *secondly*, stated their conviction that the Department of Theatre Studies at Masaryk University was ideally suited to put together a team capable of undertaking such a project. The book you are holding in your hands proves their latter point; the former is up to you as reader to judge.

We were fortunate to obtain financial support for our research project from the Czech Science Foundation (GAČR). This enabled us to establish a research team, carry out wide-ranging archival research and hold two international conferences. This reader is the final outcome and crowning achievement of the research project. The concept of the book was refined over time in the course of many discussions amongst international scholars and the members of the team, all of whom have contributed generously with their views and findings. The team members were David Drozd (project leader), Martin Bernátek, Barbora Diego Rivera Příhodová, Pavel Drábek, Šárka Havlíčková Kysová, Tomáš Kačer, Radka Kunderová, Martina Musilová, Eva Šlaisová, Jitka Šotkovská, Don Sparling and Eva Stehlíková.

Many thanks go to all those colleagues who attended our two conferences, entitled Prague Semiotic Stage Revisited I (2011) and II (2013), and helped us both to reassess the Prague School in today's theoretical contexts and to discuss the many complicated translation issues. In addition to Veronika Ambros, who has acted as the unacclaimed patron of the project, four specialists have offered constant support: Andrea Jochmanová, Yana Meerzon, Manfred Pfister and Herta Schmid.

Our research would not have been possible without access to archival materials kept in the Museum of Czech Literature (*Památník národního písemnictví*), the National Museum (*Národní muzeum*) and the archives of Charles University and Masaryk University as well as personal family archives. We are grateful for the expert assistance given by all the archival specialists at the above mentioned institutions; special thanks go to Zita Honzlová and Jarmila F. Veltrusky.

Colleagues and friends around the world have helped with the many areas of expertise such a project entails, ranging from linguistic advice through historical and theoretical knowledge to bibliographical assistance: Christian M. Billing, Maria Bochkova, Campbell Edinborough, Francesca Fulton, Elena Khokhlova, Tomáš Kubart, Dita Lánská, Markéta Polochová, Gabriella Reuss, Sergei Tcherkasski, Dmitri Trubotchkin, and James Zborowski.

The results of the research were regularly discussed with students in various seminars held at the Department of Theatre Studies. Their feedback confirmed the continuing relevance of Prague School theory and helped us to shape the selection of texts for the volume.

The whole project lasted five years, throughout which we were fortunate to be able to rely on the administrative (and moral) support of our invaluable departmental Secretary Jitka Kapinusová.

Finally, a symbolic expression of thanks and respect goes to all those scholars who promoted Prague School theory in the 1970s and 1980s. Without their introductions, translations and editions this volume would have scarcely been possible. Among them, foremost respect should go to the memory of Michael L. Quinn (1958–1994), Prague School scholar and enthusiast, editor, translator and author of the seminal book *The Semiotic Stage: Prague School Theater Theory* (1995).

David Drozd
Project Leader
Brno, August 2016

INTRODUCTION

DAVID DROZD and TOMÁŠ KAČER

Theory can clarify, not sit in judgment. Moreover, theoretical concepts are abstractions that cannot be substituted for concrete facts; these never exist in such a pure form.
Jiří Veltruský, "Theatre in the Corridor"

This book features thirty-eight texts from nine authors connected to the Prague Linguistic Circle (PLC), sometimes referred to simply as the Prague School. In the 1930s and 1940s members of the Circle created a complex theory of the theatre. Though these dates might suggest something outdated, yet another Theory consigned to the ash heap of history, the following two quotes point to a different conclusion.

> … the most urgent task of theatre studies is to examine all the individual components within the structure of a theatre performance and to learn how each of the components, with its own specific features, affects the structure as a whole … We should not only describe a word, a gesture or the set as signs but also study the characteristics of the theatrical sign as a whole, which is a synthesis of several sign systems represented by its individual components. (Veltruský 1941: 133)

Jiří Veltruský (1919–1994), who was a member of the PLC, wrote these words in the spring of 1941. That same year his tutor Jan Mukařovský (1891–1975), one of the PLC's founding members, formulated the goal of structural theory, as he called their approach, in a different way:

> We have only a single theoretical task: to show through a few remarks and examples that, despite all the material tangibility of its means (the building, machinery, sets, props, a multitude of personnel), the theatre is merely the base for a non-material interplay of forces moving through time and space and sweeping the spectator up in its changing tension, in the interplay of forces we call a stage performance. (Mukařovský 2016 [1941]: 61)

These two short fragments from Veltruský and Mukařovský grasp the core of the Prague School perspective on theatre performance. They include all the "material" elements of a theatre performance and key concepts employed by

the PLC (such as structure, sign and component), providing in fact a structural definition of theatre. Although this may sound simple, it was precisely such a simple formulation that was the starting point for structurally oriented theatre studies – and in fact the task outlined by Mukařovský has remained the point of departure for all subsequent research on the theatre.

Theories of theatre have developed and diversified immensely since the 1930s and 1940s. Fashions changed throughout the twentieth century and even theory as such has often been neglected. This book provides an opportunity to return to one of the founding moments in the history of theatre theory.

The texts in the reader you are holding in your hands were written by a group of critics and scholars, theatre-lovers and theatre practitioners associated with the Prague Linguistic Circle in the period from the 1920s to the 1940s. This whole community has become known as **The Prague School**. Most of its members dealt with language and literature, but those included in this reader explored **methodological approaches to theatre** (as well as drama and performance).

Theatre is much more than a play presented on a stage. There are dozens of professions associated with the theatre, and all of them influence what a piece will be like, from actors and the directing team to designers and tech people, to name but a few. But the list of those associated with each theatrical event ultimately runs all the way through to audiences, without whom the whole concept of theatre lacks any meaning. Put simply, theatre can come into existence in a variety of ways and a variety of activities can be understood as theatre. Today the term can be used to cover a funny sketch by a pair of middle-aged jugglers on monocycles in a piece inspired by *Hamlet*; a local amateur production of the *Oresteia* in a brutally cut version of this Classical play that lacks virtually all props and has a minimal cast, with Clytemnestra and Electra being played by one actress; or – from a completely different context – the Broadway hip-hop musical hit *Hamilton*, which has met with immense critical and popular acclaim.

When we say "theatre" in this book, we often mean what is now commonly referred to as "performance". The development of **performance studies** in the 1980s was a scholarly reaction to changes in what was understood as performance in the previous decades, and the concepts that were developed then went on to influence performative practices as such. The concept "performance", with its many secondary and implied meanings (all of which are worth studying), has become commonplace. It distinguishes itself in certain respects from "theatre", which is often limited to a specific art form. We would like to do away with this division and return to a broader use of the term "theatre".

In their heyday the Prague School thinkers made a shift in terminology similar to that employed in performance studies. They did not introduce the term "performance" as a generic label for a wide range of human activities, instead using "theatre" in this sense. Therefore this reader calls for an open mind: in nearly all cases, what the Prague School says about the theatre is also applicable to what is now called performance.

This similarity between the two schools is manifested in two areas. The first is their shared interest in non-artistic activities (the Prague School in "folk culture", "popular culture", "audience"; performance studies in "rituals"; "happenings", "performativity"), with the result that they borrow from sociology and anthropology. The second is the conceptualization of the avant-garde theatre movements of their respective eras by both schools. That is why most ideas of the Prague School are applicable to contemporary theatrical activities and to a variety of performative events, including cultural performance. And the latter concept has an immense scope. Imagine you are walking through town, turn round a corner and find yourself in the middle of a political rally. The people gathered there are applauding the speakers, who are addressing them with hand-held megaphones. A minute later, the protesters set out on a march through the streets, holding signs such as "We are the 99%" and "Occupy!" How cleverly shaped this manifestation of exercising citizens' rights suddenly seems, what a brilliant example of the town as performance itself!

Why, then, should we read the Prague School? Can its rather early investigations of theatre shed any new light on how we see theatre today? We believe so. The reason for this belief lies in the fortunate circumstance that what is referred to as the theory of the Prague School was never theory for theory's sake. Although we refer to them as theorists, Prague School thinkers always kept **close ties with theatre practice**. Instead of inventing rigid systems, they developed a multi-faceted set of analytical distinctions that can be used flexibly and universally. Although all these **analytical "tools"** have their grounding in the theatre of that period, most of them continue to prove useful today and deserve universal application.

Among the most innovative concepts, which have not grown old but on the contrary have become a standard part of the toolbox of any serious analyst of the theatre, are the following: sign, structure, dominant, component, stage figure and dramatic space. These are the most crucial concepts for understanding the Prague School. In what follows we have arranged these concepts into clusters, with brief explanations intended to elucidate the relations between them and the dynamic nature of the system.

Structure is a term that is almost self-explanatory today, but it is important to remember that it was only in the 1920s that it became a key term for

aesthetics. Prague School scholars introduced structure as something highly organized yet dynamic, full of inner tension yet unified, energy-charged, yet organized. Only such a concept of structure is then capable of encompassing the variability of avant-garde art, which asks for and provokes such conceptualization. In the early 1930s Mukařovský stated that "the conception of a work of art as a structure – that is, a system of components aesthetically deautomatized and organized into a complex hierarchy that is unified by the prevalence of one component over the others – is accepted in the theory of several arts" (Mukařovský 2016 [1931]: 192), thus providing one of the standard definitions of *structure* in the work of art.

The element that organizes the structure is usually called the **dominant**. It might be anything – in the case of theatre, think of a gesture, a motif in the text, music, the shape of a costume or spatial organization. What counts is the functionality of the dominant element or feature: "The *dominant* is that component of the work that sets in motion, and gives direction to, the relationships of all of the components" (Mukařovský 1983 [1932]: 170). Identifying the dominant is often crucial, because the dominant is what makes a particular work of art specific and unique. This approach was of significant help in overcoming a content-oriented aesthetics focusing merely on expression. Mukařovský's study "An Attempt at a Structural Analysis of an Actor's Figure" is an instructive example of the new approach: all he is doing here is trying to answer the simple question "What holds Chaplin's acting together?" Or to rephrase this in technical terms, "What is the dominant in the structure of Chaplin's acting?"

The term **element** (or **component**) describes any part of a structure that is a work of art – in our case, a theatrical performance. The first serious attempt to discuss the *elements of a theatre performance* is found in Otakar Zich's *The Aesthetics of Dramatic Art* (1931). In this extensive work, Zich provides a detailed analysis of audience perception during a theatre performance and proposes a distinction between its relatively constant elements (such as the setting, costume and actors) and those that are constantly changing (such as facial expressions, gestures and intonation). Prague School scholars took this further. Many different lists of particular elements can be found in their texts; what is striking is their methodological flexibility. When in his *Components of Theatre Expression* (1946) Jaroslav Pokorný sets out to demonstrate the variability of theatre *structure* in the course of history, he makes do with only five *elements* (literary, musical, movement, visual and dramatic), while when Mukařovský analyses Chaplin's acting he offers a much more detailed listing. It is precisely this sensitivity to the material that prevents Prague School scholars from sterile formalism (a fault sometimes attributed to semiotics).

Structure is always more than just a simple summation of its *elements* – what makes it specific is its organization, the internal contradictions of

elements and the *dominant*. When applied to theatre, this may lead to the following statement:

> Modern art has revealed the positive aesthetic effect of internal contradictions among the components of the work of art too clearly for us to be able to view the interplay of the individual elements of drama as merely complementary to one another. The modern stage work is an extremely complicated structure (more complicated than any other artistic structure) that eagerly sucks up everything that the contemporary development of technology offers and that other arts provide, but as a rule it does so in order to employ this material as a contrastive factor. (Mukařovský 2016 [1937]: 212)

Contemporary theatre is also open to conceptualization in accordance with this concept of theatrical structure.

For example, when discussing directors' approaches to classical drama, whether Shakespeare or Chekhov, we may concern ourselves with differences not only in dramaturgy or rehearsal methods but also in the very structure of productions. It is enough to compare the function of the set and visual design in Robert Wilson's theatre with that of Peter Brook's. Or consider the actor's position: some directors tend to give the actor a prominent, dominant function in the structure of a piece, while in other cases the actor may be subordinated to visually and/or musically organized stylization. A structural approach can also be used on a more subtle level. Think, for example, about different elements of acting (such as facial expression, gesture, posture and movement as well as aspects of voice – intonation, timbre and speech rhythm) in Stanislavsky's system, the Brechtian approach and Jerzy Grotowski's theatre. In each of these "systems" a different dominant element is the organizing principle. Dealing with such issues was present at the very birth of performance analysis when it was becoming established as a field within theatre studies in the early 1980s. The Prague School theory is one of the channels that provided the conceptual tools for developing this approach to the theatre.

The concept of theatre performance as a dynamic event includes the audience. It was Prague School scholars who provided the initial impulse for exploring the interaction between **a performance and its audience**. The audience is part of Mukařovský's definition of a stage performance quoted above. For him the theatre artefact could not exist without the physical presence of an audience. Bogatyrev discusses the audience on many occasions in his explorations of folk and puppet theatre, where it usually plays quite an active role (compared to, for example, its role in the fourth-wall theatre tradition) and can actually intervene in the performers' actions. Such an approach is not limited to folk (and folklore) theatre – many contemporary theatre productions draw on it. Take for example Peter Schumann's world-famous

Bread and Puppet Theatre. Their performances start with sharing bread with the audience in an attempt to create – at least for the duration of the performance – a feeling of real community. Schumann usually employs a mixture of means of expression, combining masks, puppets, clowning and fragments of improvised dialogue in unexpected and innovative ways. The event often takes place in some public space, which is invaded and transformed by the action of the performers. And when a parade of monstrous puppets is part of the show, then theatre has to (almost literary) fight its way through crowds of spectators and passers-by. All of them – the performers, the spectators and the passers-by – then get involved in debates on current political issues. As a result there is a constant interplay between performers and audience and continual shifts in spatial organization.

All discussion about new theatre space arises from a re-thinking of the actual audience and its social status. But the audience is also understood more broadly as the society for which the theatre is made. This perspective is the omnipresent background to many Prague School texts. In their analyses these scholars often focus on the internal structure of a performance or artefact, but the final question is "How does the whole structure relate to its audience?" The materiality of theatre and its everyday reality is never absent from these authors' considerations.

All the concepts mentioned above influence the way the PLC deals with the term *sign;* for us what is most important is how its members use *sign* for conceptualizing theatre. Originally the concept of the ***sign*** occurred most frequently in connection with linguistics and psychology - that is, in fields dealing primarily with the production of meaning. However, it found its use in theatre analysis in the works of Prague School thinkers. Their principal insight is that, typically, people and things on the stage do not stand there as themselves but rather represent something else (in traditional drama) or create new meanings characteristic of the performing art (in all sorts of performances and happenings). "The whole of stage reality – the dramatist's words, the actors' performances, the stage lighting – all these represent other realities. The theatre performance is a set of signs," says Jindřich Honzl (Honzl 2016 [1940]: 129). But then comes a more difficult question: what is there that is specific about a theatrical sign? "In order to understand the signs correctly, we must recognize them," claims Petr Bogatyrev (Bogatyrev 2016 [1937]: 97). Is there any unique way in which theatre produces meaning? Honzl gives a very simple but somewhat paradoxical answer:

> Many other examples could be given to illustrate the special character of the theatrical sign whereby it changes its material and passes from one aspect to another, animates

> an inanimate thing, shifts from an acoustical aspect to a visual one, and so on. … This variability of the theatrical sign, its ability to "change its garb", is its specific property. It enables us to explain the variability of the theatrical structure. (Honzl 2016 [1940]: 139)

This passage goes a good way towards demonstrating the qualities of structural thinking: the specific feature of the sign is not something material but rather the relation between sign and meanings. Acknowledging the dynamic character of the theatrical sign is a very strong argument against a literary (or text-centred) concept of theatre. The notorious discussion of the relation between drama and theatre, which can be traced back to Aristotle, becomes rather animated – even dialectical – from a structural perspective:

> … the relationship between the theatre and the drama [is] always tense, and for this reason also subject to change. In essence, however, the theatre is not subordinate to literature, nor is literature subordinate to the theatre. These extremes can only occur in certain periods of development, whereas in others there is equilibrium between the two. (Mukařovský 2016 [1941]: 69)

Drama (that is, a literary genre) becomes only one of the elements of theatre alongside many others. It is no surprise that Honzl formulated his thesis on the **mobility** of the theatre sign based on his avant-garde experiments as a director.

Signs can produce different meanings within one performance, as Honzl shows. A square of white light projected on a backdrop can become a door. The same character can be played by two or more actors – typically, at different stages of life (when young and when old). And a sign can even travel from one performance to another. A good case in point is the well-known melody of the "Wedding March", composed originally by Felix Mendelssohn as incidental music for an 1842 production of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. In time, the March became a sign of the wedding as such and so it is used in countless contexts – even outside the performing arts— to signify a wedding.

There are endless examples of the mobility of the theatrical sign and many directors who use this quality to produce a special effect on the audience. One particularly notable example is Peter Brook's famous production of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (1970), which began with an empty white stage littered about with toys and circus props; in the background the sound of Mendelssohn's composition could be heard. In the course of the performance all these things were turned into signs that gained (and changed) meaning according to the actors' actions. This effective use of the ability of the theatrical sign to shift/change its meaning dynamically made a major contribution to the enormous success of the production.

This simple but basic distinction of **sign** and **meaning** can be further refined. The most fruitful distinctions are those that arise when we think about acting and performance space.

In the case of acting, we arrive at a terminological triad: **actor**, **stage figure**, **dramatic character**. The concept of the *stage figure* has proved to be one of the most productive innovations when dealing with a dramatic text, acting and actors. Otakar Zich was the first to apply the term "stage figure" to what an actor creates on the stage: it is not just a product of the actor's inner creativity but is also an amalgam of the actor's body, costumes and actions. It is the actor when acting. More strictly formulated: "The stage figure is the dynamic unity of a whole set of signs, whose vehicle may be the actor's body, voice, movements, but also various things, from parts of the costume to the set" (Veltruský 2016 [1940]: 148). The dramatic character for Zich is then the audience's interpretation of all the signs they can see and hear on the stage produced by the actor.

This distinction had not been made earlier – and often, especially in connection with realist drama and film, it is still not clear to some audiences even today. But it is extremely difficult to analyse acting without it, because such an analysis requires considering the actor, the stage figure and the dramatic character at the same time. Strange as it may seem, it is clear that we perceive an actor as a "real" person and the actor's specific impersonation of a particular fictional person from a play simultaneously. This claim can be illustrated by an example of an internationally famous star playing a character. Let us take Benedict Cumberbatch playing the role of Hamlet. The audience know it is Cumberbatch and they are familiar with his typical features as a star actor in British theatre and film, just as they know and are familiar with Shakespeare's Hamlet (most likely from discussions in English classes). But when watching *Hamlet* with Cumberbatch, the audience are seeing a particular impersonation of the Prince of Denmark by the actor Cumberbatch; they are watching a unique stage figure. They perceive the actor (Benedict Cumberbatch) and his creation on the stage (the stage figure), while being able to imagine Hamlet (the dramatic character) – all at once. To borrow a term from cognitive theory, the spectator can perceive a stage figure and understand that it consists of an actor and represents a character thanks to **conceptual blending**.

The same phenomenon of co-existing layers can be recognized in the case of **space**. Otakar Zich introduced a strict differentiation between the theatre space (an actual theatre building), the stage (an empty space built intentionally for theatre productions), the set (real space, material on stage that represents another space) and finally **dramatic space**, the imagined (and fictional) place of an action. The pair of terms "stage figure" and "dramatic character" is in fact parallel to "set" and "dramatic space". Mukařovský describes the difference as follows:

> Dramatic space is not identical with the stage and not at all with three-dimensional space, for it originates in time through the gradual changes in the spatial relations between the actor and the stage and between the actors themselves. … Owing to its energy, dramatic space can extend beyond the stage in all directions. This gives rise to the phenomenon referred to as the imaginary stage. (Mukařovský 2016 [1941]: 69–70.)

Note especially the importance Mukařovský accords to "gradual changes" and the "energy" of the dramatic space. He evidently understands the production of meaning as a dynamic process (which of course includes the audience, as we have seen above in his definition of theatre), not as a merely static (or even mechanical) decoding or reading of signs. Zich's idea that dramatic space is not just an imagined place of action but also an energy-charged space that is a reflection of relations between characters was adopted by both Prague School theoreticians and avant-garde theatre practitioners and further developed. When Veltruský touches upon the issue of *dramatic space*, he stresses the spatial character of relations between dramatic characters: "All the relations between stage figures and characters are projected into space. They constitute what is termed dramatic space, a set of immaterial relations that constantly changes in time as these relations themselves change" (Veltruský 2016 [1941]: 250). The same is true of Mukařovský, Honzl and others – they see dramatic space not only as a fictional space but as a manifestation of relations in performances. In such a conceptualization, the *dramatic space* describes the same phenomenon that Eisenstein terms *mise-en-scène*.

This concept of the *dramatic space* has also had a profound impact on modern theatre **directing and stage design**. The dynamic relationship between the set and dramatic space becomes the driving force of artistic creativity. What was quite stable/settled in the realist theatre of the late nineteenth century was viewed as problematic by avant-garde directors and architects. For them, the set should not only represent the place of action but also embody in visual form the structure of the dramatic relations, the inner structure of the dramatic space. The stage and set should be as dynamic as possible. This led to many discussions on the new organization of theatre space, which have become an inseparable part of contemporary stage design.

Experiments with space marked the whole of the twentieth century. The idea that the stage (or any performance space) should reflect the inner structure of the dramatic space found a very explicit manifestation, for example, in the performances of Grotowski (*Cordian*, *Faust*, *The Constant Prince* and especially *Apocalypsis cum Figuris*). Each of them had a unique, special organization of the auditorium and the acting space. This is one of the practical results of the modernist and avant-garde projects that were theorized by the Prague School (see especially Veltruský's "Theatre in the Corridor"). Actual practice

confirmed that there is a mutual connection between the structure of the (imaginary) dramatic space and the performance space.

The background of the Prague School in **linguistics** meant that great attention was also devoted to the language of theatre and drama. Roman Jakobson and Jan Mukařovský provided some of the most relevant insights into language and its functions (as most of their essays are available in English in existing editions we have not included all the relevant texts in this book).

Structural linguists identified various **functions of language**; these could also be identified in the language of drama. These functions are organized in theatre and drama in a different way than in everyday communication. Speech in drama has two addressees – a fictional person (or persons) in the play and, simultaneously, the audience/reader of the play.

Speech is a system of various signs. Through speech, a speaker expresses his or her state of mind, but at the same time speech is also a sign of the speaker's cultural and social status and so forth. The playwright and the actors employ all of these signs on the stage to express the social and/or cultural status of the characters. These ideas, developed among others by Petr Bogatyrev in "Theatrical Signs" (included in this reader), can be used in drama analysis – for example to describe the style of a particular playwright or for a more cultural studies oriented reading of a play.

Mukařovský paid particular attention to the semantic construction of speech. His analysis showed that the traditional distinction between **dialogue** and **monologue** is not subtle enough to describe the changing characteristics of speech in delivery and the construction of semantic contexts in a spoken or written text. For this reason he introduced the concept of "*dialogic quality*, designating a potential tendency toward the alternation of two or more semantic contexts, a tendency that is manifested not only in dialogue but also in monologue" (Mukařovský 2016 [1940]: 243). To demonstrate the **dialogic quality** (or *potential*) of a monologic text, Mukařovský used a theatre adaptation of a prose text made by the avant-garde director E. F. Burian, concluding that "the monologue has, therefore, actually generated its dialogization from itself, from its structure, not from its subject" (ibid.). He again devotes more attention to construction (or structure) than to the content. Veltruský followed Mukařovský's method. In his *Drama as Literature* (1942) he provided many examples of dramatic monologues with a dialogic internal structure (for example, Iago's speeches in *Othello*), leaving aside superficial distinctions such as the number of speakers in a dialogue and monologue.

This approach is even more inspiring today than it was in the 1930s. In the **post-dramatic theatre**, the function and nature of the dramatic text undergoes a significant change. Starting from Beckett's late experimental plays (*Not I*, *That Time*, *Catastrophe*, *Footfalls* and others), through writings by Heiner

Müller, Elfriede Jelinek and Sarah Kane, we can observe the disappearance of the traditional concept of character and the dissolution of narrative structures and dialogue.

An approach to the theatre that sees it as a complex **structure** of signs enabled the Prague School theorists to arrive at a detailed study of the creation of the sign and of changes and shifts within it. What happens in a performance is not a simple one-directional communication between the stage and the auditorium – or, for that matter, the author(s) and the audience. Complex relations exist between all the signs on the stage. A performance is an organism with only a few fixed features (and that if the analyst is lucky). It works as a structured system of signs and as such it can be "read". Its internal relations are continuously changing and they exist within a certain hierarchy.

The emphasis on this view of theatre as a system of signs (a functional, ordered and meaning-productive model) directly preceded the **semiotic** approach, which dominated the theatre theory of the 1970s and 1980s and as such is familiar to theory-oriented students of theatre. Rather paradoxically, the above-mentioned performance studies tried to incorporate semiotic findings into its framework, but at the same time it was a direct reaction to the course of development of the semiotics of theatre, which had turned into a jargon-littered self-referencing "club".

Semiotics as a discipline has a long tradition (beginning with the work of the Swiss linguist Ferdinand de Saussure and the American philosopher C. S. Peirce around the turn of the twentieth century) and several stages. For a number of historians, the Prague School represents a particular stage of semiotic thinking. Zich's work in particular has been interpreted as a proto-semiotic analysis of traditional (realistic) theatre and opera. A number of Prague School authors included in this reader developed Zich's ideas, applying them to avant-garde theatre and performance in general. It is not surprising, then, that semioticians of the 1970s and 1980s acknowledged the semiotic legacy of the Prague School.

The approach of the Prague School to the concept of the sign inspired others to apply it to the arts as well as to other **cultural activities** in the general sense. Roland Barthes's *Mythologies* (1957) as well as various concepts of cultural studies advanced by many other thinkers treated *culture as text*. This idea can be traced back from Roland Barthes to Claude Lévi-Strauss and further back to the latter's key inspiration, Roman Jakobson, and even to the 1920s, to Jakobson's early collaboration and friendship with Petr Bogatyrev in Moscow and then in Prague. This reader includes several essays by Petr Bogatyrev in which he studies how our daily actions might be intended to signify something or be understood as meaningful. This is something we have all experienced. For instance, imagine you are passing by a four star hotel and

see the doormen and porters hurrying back and forth. Their elegant uniforms and smooth, practised movements when opening limousine doors and carrying luggage send a clear message: this is a true four-star performance.

Petr Bogatyrev's analysis of "Clothing as a Sign", for example, offers revealing examples of dress conventions (sign structures) that reflect social situations or social status. This is the exact point that is later developed in Barthes's discussion on fashion, Richard Schechner's concept of "restored behaviour" and Yuri Lotman's semiosphere. In this context, it is then also possible to read the Prague School as a direct precursor of **cultural studies**.

Yet the approach of the Prague School to theories of art and culture was different. While some recent theories (or rather, "Theories" with a capital T) have often tended to be self-obsessed with new concepts and terms, the Prague School focused primarily on the analysis of its material. Here the Prague School's pragmatic approach to theory is clearly evident: the functional strategy of analysis is used when it brings results. Conceptions of the theory are subject to a functional approach as well: when the application of a tool brings no new findings, it is put back in the toolbox or even discarded completely. When Veltruský wrote an essay on Burian's production of *Alladine and Palomides* in 1939 he provided an analysis of an actual theatre event – in fact, what we would today call a **performance analysis**. At the same time he tested the linguistic concept of sign and tried to see to what extent it could be used in understanding specific ways of creating meaning in the theatre. Reading the essay makes this clear: theory follows the material that is to be analysed, not the other way round.

A BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE STRUCTURE OF THE READER

This publication consists of two main parts, which follow after this Introduction and the short commentary on editorial issues entitled "Editors' Choices and Guidelines". The first major part is the reader itself, which provides the first comprehensive and critical anthology of texts reflecting the development of Prague School theatre theory from its beginnings in the aesthetics of Otakar Zich. The majority of the thirty-eight texts presented here come from the 1930s and early 1940s, the time when the Prague Linguistic Circle was most active, functioning as a theoretical laboratory as well as a focal point for scholars, artists and intellectuals. A number of the essays presented here date from the postwar period but carry on the original pre-war momentum. This first major part is followed by the second, an afterword entitled "Prague School Theatre Theory and Its Contexts" by Pavel Drábek and a group of authors. This describes the background to the emergence of the Prague School, its aim being to facilitate a better and deeper understanding of these texts.

By its very nature the book is not meant to be read as though it were a novel, from first word to last in a given order. Instead, the reader is invited to explore those parts that are personally relevant at a given time. Just as the Prague School theorists viewed theory as a **toolbox** of approaches to theatre analysis, so this reader should be considered a toolbox of possibilities. For this reason, the eight sections of the anthology cover the most common areas of performance analysis.

The reader is organized thematically and structurally rather than chronologically, focusing on issues and themes in the study of the theatre as an art form and as artistic practice.

I THEATRE IN GENERAL
This section is devoted to the theatre as a specific and unique art form with its own set of theoretical problems. The Prague School was among the first to emancipate the theatre as a discipline worthy of academic and critical reflection, independent of literary studies, sociology and popular culture or ethnographic enquiry.

II SIGN – OBJECT – ACTION
The essays presented here are the first to theorize the concept of the sign in the theatre, doing so in a pre- or proto-semiotic way. Moving outside linguistic systems as set up by Ferdinand de Saussure and C. S. Peirce, the Prague School formulated its own dynamic system of terminology of the sign, drawing heavily on contemporary phenomenology. Its theories developed into discussions of signs within larger systems of relations – structures – that operate in particular hierarchies where some of the components are dominant, others less so. The essays in this section, written by theorists as well as the theatre practitioner Jindřich Honzl, elaborate a terminology that helps articulate what actually happens in the theatre during a performance.

III FIGURES AND PLAY
With Otakar Zich's theory of acting as their starting point, Petr Bogatyrev, Jan Mukařovský and Jindřich Honzl elaborated critical tools for speaking of and analysing the actor and the actor's art. These essays are related not only to theatre studies but also to early play theory (Bogatyrev's first essay). While three of the texts discuss Charlie Chaplin, Honzl's study contextualizes analytical theory in the framework of theatre history and its stock types.

IV FROM PAGE TO STAGE
Jan Mukařovský and Jiří Veltruský devoted systematic attention to dramatic literature and the literary component in the theatre. While Otakar Zich

disregarded the special position of the dramatic text within the theatre performance, viewing it as a merely subservient component of the whole, both Mukařovský and Veltruský highlight its unique position as an artefact that exists within the theatrical structure in a certain state of autonomy. Mukařovský also observes – in one of the earliest texts on adaptation and dramatization – that the theatre often makes use of an inner dialogism present in non-dramatic literature.

V LAYERS OF SPACE

The essays in this section are dedicated to innovative and sometimes visionary explorations of the stage space, from implied or imaginary space in drama through performance space and the proxemic relations on stage to early theories of scenography as stage space in the theatre and in film. These essays link the theatre with the visual arts, theorizing the moment when the in-house visual artist (the stage designer) became a virtual poet of form, creating spaces that will then be inhabited by characters, action and drama.

VI TOWARDS STRUCTURES OF MODERN ACTING

Advancing general theories of acting, the stage directors Jiří Frejka and Jindřich Honzl contributed not only to modern, avant-garde theatre practice but also to criticism by discussing particular details of the modern actor's art, from mimicry through mimetic signs and signals to a creative engagement with actorly conventions. This section is complemented by a 1976 essay by Jiří Veltruský that further refines the critical tools of acting theory with a view to the current state of the art.

VII ETHNOGRAPHICAL ENCROACHMENTS

The essays in this part focus on the relations between the theatre and society – both civic and folk – discussing performative folk traditions (among them folk ballads, which also had a visual and a performative aspect), folk costumes in relation to their performative, theatre-like qualities, as well as the theatre's function in the public sphere and its role for the formation of a civic society. Rather than being concerned with the artefact of the theatre, these essays focus on the theatre's social dimensions.

VIII ART – MEDIA – SOCIETY

The concluding section of the reader is dedicated to texts that might – somewhat anachronistically – be referred to as intermedial theory. Their focus is on the use of different media in the theatre, the concept of the stage metaphor (both essays on this topic were written by a leading avant-garde theatre director), the active use of puppets in an innovative theatre production, and a far-reaching rethinking of the theatre as a hierarchy of components that

is inherently linked with the norms and values of the society in which it exists.

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Mukařovský, Jan (1983 [1932]) "Standard Language and Poetic Language" in Josef Vachek and Libuše Dušková (eds) *Praguiana. Some Basic and Less Known Aspects of the Prague Linguistic School. LLSEE*, vol. 12, Amsterdam, Philadelphia: Benjamins, pp. 165–85.
— (2016 [1940]) "Dialogue and Monologue", this reader, pp. 220–46.
— (2016 [1941]) "On the Current State of the Theory of Theatre", this reader, pp. 59–75.
— (2016 [1931]) "An Attempt at a Structural Analysis of an Actor's Figure (Chaplin in *City Lights*)", this reader, pp. 192–98.
— (2016 [1937]) "On Stage Dialogue", this reader, pp. 212–15.
Veltruský, Jiří (1941) "Dramatický tekst jako součást divadla" [Dramatic Text as a Component of Theatre], *Slovo a slovesnost*, vol. 7, no. 3, pp. 132–44.
— (2016 [1940]) "People and Things in the Theatre", this reader, pp. 147–56.
— (2016 [1941]) "Dramatic Text as a Component of Theatre", this reader, pp. 247–67.

EDITORS' CHOICES AND GUIDELINES

Access to Prague School structuralist texts on the theatre has been difficult for readers of English. A number of texts have been translated, but they are scattered among various publications[1] that appeared over time and differed in their focus (literary studies, film studies, collections of a particular author's texts on a variety of subjects). An even larger number of texts has remained untranslated. As editors, we made it our first task to collect all existing texts on the theatre written by Prague School structuralists, disregarding whether they were available in English or not. We then made a representative selection, the aim being to include texts covering the widest scope of topics within the field of theatre studies as well as reaching beyond it; these were subsequently grouped together according to areas. The result is thirty-eight texts divided into eight groups. Within each of these groups the texts are presented in chronological order based on their date of origin (typically, the date of first publication or the date when the paper was given as a lecture). This helps to create a sense of the context of the theoretical debate at the time and, where appropriate, of the development of concepts over the course of time.

To provide the reader with the fullest context, this edition includes previously published footnotes (those of the authors as well as of later editors). Authors' footnotes have been preserved, but when these include references they have been incorporated into the main text; footnotes added by subsequent editors are marked as "editorial notes" with the date of publication of the edition in which they appeared. Newly added notes are marked as "editor's notes".

In the case of cited works, wherever possible references are made to the most recent English translation. Where no English translation exists, we refer to the most recent, or the most standard, edition in the original language.

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1 Most importantly the following: Garvin, Paul L. (ed.) (1964) *A Prague School Reader in Esthetics, Literary Structure and Style*, Georgetown: Georgetown University Press; Matejka, Ladislav and Titunik, Irwin R. (eds) (1976) *Semiotics of Art: Prague School Contributions*, Cambridge, Mass.: The M.I.T. Press; Matejka, Ladislav (ed.) (1976) *Sound, Sign and Meaning*, Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press; Mukařovský, Jan (1977) *The Word and Verbal Art*, New Haven and London: Yale University Press; Mukařovský, Jan (1978) *Structure, Sign and Function*, New Haven and London: Yale University Press; Steiner, Peter (ed.) (1981) *The Prague School: Selected Writings*, 1929–1946, Austin: The University of Texas Press.

We include dates of original publication in square brackets after the year of publication of the cited edition. It is hoped that this practice will make it easier for the reader to follow the intellectual context in which the authors were writing, what trends they were reacting to and the chronology of the debate. There is a special case of this referencing: whenever an author cites from a work that is included in this reader we make a cross-reference to this volume (marked as "Author 2016") but also provide the date of the first publication – usually in Czech – of this work so as to give a better idea of the diachronic development of a particular critical issue.

All references and quotes have been double-checked or researched in accordance with current academic standards. The citation style has been updated and unified in all texts. However, it will come as no surprise that, with texts as dated as these and in view of the "open-minded" approach towards standards of academic citations that prevailed at the time when they originated, it proved impossible at times to find exact references. These instances are footnoted.

As this reader is a collection of translations, a specific set of editorial rules relating to English editions had to be adopted. The thirty-eight texts included in this volume break down into three main groups as far as their availability hitherto in English is concerned. Something over a third (14) have appeared earlier in English translation. Slightly under a half (18) are appearing here in English for the first time. Six articles (four by Jiří Veltruský and two by Karel Brušák) were either written in English originally or translated into English by their authors. This situation presented the editors with a number of problems when it came to language editing. Two in particular loomed large.

First, the translations that already existed were the work of a great many different translators. Some had a deep knowledge of Czech, others less; in some cases pairs (one a Czech speaker and the other a native English speaker) worked together to produce the translation. As a result, the quality of the translations varied greatly. This was exacerbated by the varying approaches to translation: some translators favoured a faithful rendering of the original, while others felt free to paraphrase or even edit the original text, leaving out passages or adding bits at will. In addition, there was great diversity in the English terminology, with a number of key terms appearing in three or four guises, thus clouding their meaning for the English-speaking reader.

Second, most of the translations had been made at a fairly late date, when semiotics had come to rule the roost. Hence semiotic terminology was often employed in the translations, in this way distorting the texts in a way that tended to mask their originality and their intellectual origins.

Faced with this situation, the editors agreed on the following guidelines:

- The translations should keep as close to the original as possible, without additions or excisions. In some cases this has resulted in texts that are by current standards repetitive or stylistically odd, even obscure in places, but it was felt that it was more important to present to the reader the texts as they were actually written by the authors in question rather than tidied up versions reflecting some particular editorial bias.
- The vast majority of the texts were written seventy years ago and earlier. Though nowadays they may strike one stylistically as somewhat old-fashioned, even in places archaic, this was not the case when they were written. Thus the translations employ neutral current English, neither colloquial nor overly literary.
- Wherever possible, the effort has been made to unify terminology, the aim being to make it easier to understand the approach of the Prague School and appreciate the links between authors. In a few particular cases, however, authors developed a somewhat personal terminology which, though idiosyncratic, was consistent and is made clear in the texts in question. In these cases the texts were left largely untouched. This relates in particular to texts by Jiří Veltruský and Karel Brušák.
- Where necessary, translations have been "de-semoticized"; that is, terms more appropriate to the period in which the texts were written have been used to replace terms that became current with the rise of semiotic discourse. A typical example can be found in Jindřich Honzl's "Ritual and Theatre". In the original translation of this essay into English, published in 1982, there is the following passage: "A religious interpretation is a special case of a semiotic interpretation of reality, and a religious act is a special case of a semiotic action. We have said that the semioticity of a ritual action makes it analogous to a theatrical action." For the current publication, this passage has been re-formulated as follows: "A religious interpretation is a special case of a sign-based interpretation of reality, and a religious act is a special case of an action that functions as a sign. We have said that the ritual action's nature as a sign makes it analogous to a theatrical action."

One last point. In many places the texts quote passages that have been translated into Czech from some foreign language. Whenever such passages came from texts that have been translated into English, these versions have been used. Where this was not the case, every effort has been made to obtain access to the original text (for example, in French or German or Russian) and use this as a check in determining the final English wording.

I THEATRE IN GENERAL

The texts in this opening section of the reader provide a conceptual framework for the whole volume. Three crucial personalities with their distinctive contributions are introduced here.

Otakar Zich's theoretical work, especially *The Aesthetics of Dramatic Art: A Theoretical Dramaturgy* (1931), is referred to frequently in texts by members of the Prague School. However, the work itself is too complex (and too extensive) to be included in the present volume. We have therefore chosen a different text by Zich – a 1923 lecture entitled "Principles of Theoretical Dramaturgy", which outlines all his key concepts and can serve as a short summary of, and introduction to, concepts that preceded the writings of the Prague School.

"On the Current State of the Theory of Theatre" (1941) is one of Jan Mukařovský's few texts dedicated solely to theatre. His first attempt to systematize a structural approach to theatre, it relies on and appropriates a great deal from Zich's notions. He builds on Zich's idea that in the case of theatre it is the actual theatre performance that is the work of art, and arrives at the quite radical concept of the theatre performance as an interplay of meanings and forces between the actors and the audience. In his definition, Mukařovský captures the processual and interactive nature of theatre. He also stresses the function of the theatre audience in the processes of creation and reception, while reflecting on the constant interest of avant-garde theatre practitioners in the social function of theatre.

The full version of Jiří Veltruský's "Structuralism and Theatre" was only discovered recently (see the note on its publication history), but it demonstrates well the open critical discussions that went on within the Prague Linguistic Circle. Written and delivered in 1941 by a young scholar (Veltruský was only 22 at the time) as the precondition for his admission as a member of the Circle, it is a daring and well-thought-out critical summary of the state of structural theatre theory at the time. It is important to contextualize the text. In the preceding paper, "On the Current State of the Theory of Theatre", Mukařovský (who was Veltruský's teacher) is attempting to sketch out a system, while Veltruský is providing a critical evaluation of the founding theoretical concepts. Both papers were written at the same time, a clear indication that in this period Prague School accounts of theatre did not form a coherent theory but were rather part of a work-in-progress.

PRINCIPLES OF THEORETICAL DRAMATURGY

OTAKAR ZICH

[Zich wrote "Principy teoretické dramaturgie" in Czech before the publication of his 1931 seminal work, *The Aesthetics of Dramatic Art: A Theoretical Dramaturgy*. It remained in manuscript until 1997, when it was published in *Divadelní revue*, vol. 8, no. 1, pp. 12–24.]

Translated by Pavel Drábek

Editor's note: Throughout the text, Zich frequently employs the convention, originating in Greek and Latin usage and continuing down to the present in Czech, of referring to a literary work as a "poem", to literature as "poetry", to an author as a "poet", to something literary as "poetic", and so on. At a few points, this also has some bearing on his argument. As this convention has not held such a prominent place in English-language criticism and critical theory, both in the past as well as, more particularly, in the present, this translation employs instead, in most cases, the standard current terminology.

Some of the numbers and letters dividing the text into units have been adjusted to form a logically organized whole.

There are several instances where Zich makes a reference to a passage elsewhere in his text that cannot be found in his article. However, the manuscript of the text was never properly edited, and such references would appear to be notes Zich made for himself, indicating how he planned to develop the concepts in question; as such they have been deleted and marked with an ellipsis in square brackets.

This article will deal with the aesthetics of drama as a stage or theatrical work. It will also deal with specific theoretical problems stemming from the fact that not only are these works very complex but their components are *heterogeneous*. There exist very complex works of art (architecture, the symphony) whose components are, nevertheless, homogeneous. The complexity that characterizes them when executed arises from a division of labour. But all those involved carry out labour of the same kind, whereas with a theatrical work not only is there the greatest complexity but the performances and contributions of the individuals are of different kinds. Most importantly, the work we perceive has components of quite different natures and we perceive them differently: the actors' acting, dance (if present) and the set through sight, and the actors' speech, and song and music (if present), through hearing.

Nevertheless, a work, if it is a work of art, must form a unified whole. The task then is to examine the mutual *relation* of these components and the *nature* of the individual components as parts of the whole work.

These issues are usually addressed by deductive logic, which leads to dogmatic claims that are at variance with reality. Even superficial observation tells us that some of the components of a dramatic work point to specific disciplines in the arts. The dramatic text may be assigned to literature; opera music to music; the stage set to the visual arts. With a view to the unity of a work, it was felt that one of these arts had to be dominant; hence drama was simply assigned to one discipline or another. But this is too one-sided; the other components are insufficiently valued. A play is defined as "primarily (or wholly) a literary work", an opera as "primarily (or wholly) music". The former definition in particular is commonly accepted (theatre critics, for instance, are mostly literary people). The latter has been challenged, in particular by Wagner's reform, at least to the extent that it is said that "opera is music and literature" (like vocal music).

These views are understandable given that those who express them consider the *printed text* to be the "play" and the *score* to be the "opera". For them the art of acting (which includes the stage set) is no more than a reproductive art, like the arts of recitation or playing an instrument. This view has its critics, especially among actors, who are right in claiming their art to be not only reproductive but also productive; they do not merely carry out what the author directly prescribed for them but also create something new, which the author specifies only indirectly or partially but which is otherwise free.

There is no question that when the text of a play or an opera score is written down this does *not* mean that the dramatic work is finished in the way that a completed novel or painting is finished, or even in the way that a score of, for example, a symphony is to a certain extent finished, where the only remaining task is to perform (or to bring to completion, homogeneously) what is indicated by the notes. A dramatic work must still be brought to completion by heterogeneous creation, that is by the performer's art – not only speaking or singing but also acting – and also the creation of the set in which it is to be acted.

In view of this sequential creation of the dramatic work, it is clear that several arts work together to achieve a common end, and that a dramatic work is thus one that *links up* several arts, arts that are of artistically equal value, though some precede others in time while others follow later.

This realization raises the question of the relation between the arts when sharing in the creation of drama on the one hand, and these arts when operating on their own on the other. For with the exception of acting, which exists only within the dramatic work, all the other arts that are joined together in drama (literature, music, the visual arts) have their own spheres of activity,

and it is clear that the laws they comply with when they are independent and when they are linked are not identical.

This circumstance is sometimes expressed by saying that their autonomy (which is the subject of the aesthetics of the individual arts) is forced to make compromises when they are joined together; there is talk of the autonomy of the literary demands, of the demands of the actors, and so on. This does indeed recognize the actual fact (that the laws are not identical in both cases), but the formulation is incorrect, since a work of compromise or full of contradictions – which arise from the *essence* of the dramatic work (as a "combination of arts") and are therefore inherent – could never achieve any unity. The evidence of good dramas and operas does not bear this out. If there are such contradictions in other works, they arise solely from faulty theory, which for example approaches drama as literature and so disregards the actor; however, these are dramatically imperfect works. Often this is no more than ineptitude on the part of the author in asking the impossible of the actor – but the same thing may happen to a composer with respect to the musician. In a good dramatic work (be it spoken or musical) there are *no* antinomies or contradictions.

However, much more often, even when it is realized that several arts of equal value are joined together in the dramatic work, the approach followed is deductive and dogmatic. What is sought is uniformity among the laws valid for the various arts, whether they are on their own or form components of a dramatic work. This has two consequences:

(a) Laws valid for one art are transferred unchanged to the dramatic work. This is very often the case in theatre practice and quite naturally the art of acting suffers most, since in the creation of the dramatic work it comes last. So despite the theory of "arts of equal value", this case coincides with what was mentioned above. The drama is conceived exclusively as a purely literary work with no regard for its being performed by actors; these are termed *closet dramas*. These dramas represent a crux for both actors and stage directors; if they nevertheless decide to perform one, the author's disregard for acting has its revenge and the drama proves to be – undramatic. Likewise in opera: the autonomous efforts of the musical performers are so great that they require the author to provide texts fit "for music". These "librettos" are then of such a nature that literary histories do not even mention them. And an *opera* created in such a way (with arias, duets, choruses, and so on) is, once again, undramatic when performed. One could talk in this respect of *concert opera*. (An error analogous to deductive dogmatism is to impose laws valid in the visual arts as *laws of the theatre stage*.) … That the audience does not feel this undramatic quality as strongly as with a theatre performance results from their satisfaction with the impressions they have become used to in concert

halls, even though they are sitting in a theatre auditorium. Nevertheless, anyone who has at least a little dramatic sense is well aware of this, and it is understandable that playwrights scorn these "operas".

(b) Laws that are valid for a particular art within a *dramatic* work are regarded as its laws *generally*. This view has only been expressed theoretically, by Wagner, who took it *ad absurdum* by denying the individual arts the right to an independent existence at all. It was claimed that such individual egotism on the part of the arts was merely of developmental, so to speak "educational", import. But the actual life of the arts shows clearly enough that this artistic communism of the arts is a theoretical error.

If we are to address the problem we set forth at the start, we have to proceed by a *strictly inductive* method. That is to say, we have to identify the *material* to be examined and induce the laws *from it*. And right away, in demarcating this material, it is necessary to emphasize its nature in order to avoid making a common mistake, which is in fact that of begging the question. "Dramatic works" are not manuscripts or printed texts but works that are performed. That is, they are not Shakespeare's *Hamlet* or Smetana's *The Bartered Bride*[1] as they appear in a book or a score but these works performed on real stages by real artists. What we have just experienced when we are leaving the theatre is the dramatic work. Although this seems almost self-evident, in reality we are so used to substituting for it the abovementioned printed texts or manuscripts that our theoretical reflections continually lead us to an erroneous conception and to incorrect formulations of laws and rules that give the false appearance of being empirical. Please bear this in mind throughout the entire essay.

The dramatic work, then, is what we have perceived in the theatre (and not while reading at home). If we wish to arrive at its laws, we have to *analyse this percept of ours*. And this is the second important thing. This percept forms a unity and there is nothing to indicate that it is "composed" – let alone sequentially – of several arts. We may be aware of how the work was created; however, that is theoretical knowledge. The *psychological analysis of an impression of a theatrical performance* must be our point of departure. We shall certainly recognize the individual heterogeneous artistic aspects but we shall consider them as they are (as components), without any connection to the arts to which they may be related. This is not to say that we shall completely ignore the process through which the dramatic work is created. Once we have resolved the questions posed at the beginning of this essay and turn to the question of the style of dramatic works, we shall have to take into account

1 [Editor's note: The opera *The Bartered Bride* (1866), by the composer Bedřich Smetana (1824–1884), probably the best known and most frequently performed work of Czech classical music, considered both a classic and a national treasure.]

the psychological processes of their creation. However, that is another question, one that can only be resolved when questions are precisely formulated with regard to the *essence* of the dramatic work and the *nature of and relation between the components* that are found in it.

Our clear definition of the material has another important consequence: that we must limit our consideration to *the dramatic art of the present*, since it is the only theatre we know in the way required, that is, as produced. From the past we may consider only what is still viable – that is, what is still being produced, and in the form in which it is currently being produced. From earlier periods our only sure knowledge is of what has managed to survive – that is, written (printed) texts and/or music; for even more remote periods, only texts (though we know, for example, that Classical tragedy was accompanied by music). Our information on historical performance practices is very imperfect, and sometimes lacking completely. Hence the historical perspective is irrelevant and of no value for our aesthetic reflections since the objective here is to deduce the laws of today's dramatic art, laws that might be employed in current artistic practice. This is also the broader requirement of aesthetics (and of scholarship generally) – to be living scholarship. And of course there is even less reason to consider "prehistoric" hypotheses of the origins of dramatic art, of some original unity, of some "primeval art" that gave birth to all the others, and so on.

If we look at all the material that can be gathered together in accordance with the above principles, taking into account various types of "dramatic" and "theatrical" and "scenic" art (spoken drama, music drama, mime, ballet, the great variety of mixed forms such as *mélodrame*, concert opera, costume dramas and such like, not to mention those of lower artistic quality), it transpires that *all of them* share one element, which is *acting*. The art of acting is then the *necessary* component of dramatic art, ever-present and therefore *essential*. All the others may be there but they need not be, whether it is a question of an entire work or of its segments or parts. This is immediately obvious with music, but it is also true of the text. There is no text in a mime performance accompanied by music, but in opera and in spoken drama there are sometimes also passages, even very long ones, in which the word is absent. Yet the work remains a piece of dramatic art. This is even true of the stage, at least in the sense that it may be reduced to a mere space, a place (without any further specification) where the actors are acting.

This insight into the essential nature of acting for the dramatic work is of such crucial importance that nothing would change even if we were to extend our material to include other historical periods, relying on the sketchy accounts of the performance of dramatic works in past eras (Classical theatre, medieval plays, folk plays, and so on); here in particular we would meet with numerous genres where the text was completely subordinate or absent alto-

gether. However, only texts, dramatic "poems", have survived from the past and we have therefore become accustomed to looking upon drama as a type of literature. This error, supported by the earliest known theory (Aristotle), which has been misinterpreted (drama and literature then were much closer to each other in all ways), needs to be corrected first before we move on to a positive diagnosis.

Drama is not a type of literature. The objective proof was presented above: a dramatic work may exist without a text, for example mime. Still, it could be objected that the theme of the mime performance, its "storyline" (and also "characters"), is literary, "poetic". However, that would be a mistake resting in an overly broad understanding of the term "poetic". It is not only poems and novels that we call poetic but also anything that evokes a multitude of varied notions and thoughts in our imagination, such as a painting, or even something that puts us in a certain mood. We speak about a poetic landscape, a poetic moment; what is meant by this is a calm, harmonious mood – "poetic" here is almost the same as "beautiful". This is the idiom of everyday life and of popular aesthetics, as used by critics in particular. The *scholarly* sense of the word *poetic* has to be defined accurately so that the word may become the label for a concept. And here it is evident that we can only designate as poetic or literary qualities the qualities of literature proper, that is, the art that uses speech to achieve aesthetic effects. The literary effect, quality, and so on are then the *aesthetic effect* (quality, and so on) *of words*.

This definition indicates that the real (that is, the acted) "storyline" of a mime performance, as well as of any other drama, is characterized not by literary qualities but rather by acting, and the same is true of the real characters of a mime performance and of any drama (that is, the characters represented by the actors). It is only the lines spoken by these characters that have, or may have, literary qualities. It is worth observing what happens to these literary qualities during the performance of a drama. Relatively speaking, they retreat into the background. The effect of specifically literary qualities – nuances of thought and mood, wordplay, allusions, images, and so on – is weakened in performance. Hence the blandness, when we listen to them on the stage, of many closet dramas that, when read, moved us with their exceptional literary quality. This is not always the fault of the acoustics, though this is a well-known phenomenon, referred to as *theatre acoustics*. The cause lies elsewhere, as the opposite case shows: the dialogues of true dramatists (Shakespeare, Molière) have a stronger effect on the stage than when read. This is because they have, in addition to literary qualities, dramatic qualities. Similarly, on stage, unlike in reading, the temporal structure (architecture) of the drama and the coherence and concreteness of characters stand out more clearly. And of course by the same token the deficiencies of these qualities also stand out, since these are not literary qualities, or at

least not exclusively literary. Diderot, the first great theorist of dramatic art, claimed that an act is too long if it has too little action (that is, acted, not narrated, action) and too much talking. Otto Ludwig (1871) later wrote that a drama is good when it is comprehensible even without words (as for instance when it is performed in a language we do not understand).

However, one may object to all this that the dramatist first creates the text and this text as a verbal form is a literary creation, even within our strict definition. The performances of the actors as well as the stage set and possibly even the music are then shaped on the basis of the text. So is the literary creation not then the essence of a dramatic work, or even its guiding principle? Mime is in fact a special phenomenon – and after all, its artistic legitimacy may be questioned.

This objection would certainly be a fundamental one if it agreed with the reality. This leads us to the process of the creation of a dramatic text, and this mental process must be subjected to psychological analysis by means of empirical tools, that is, from relevant material. If we do so and study the claims of true dramatists about their work, particularly dramatists who were also theorists of their discipline, we find that their initial impulses were not verbal, that is literary, but were related instead to actors and the stage. Diderot says: "When playwrights conceive of a character, they associate it with a concrete physiognomy. The image of a character acting on the stage must suggest the character's lines to the author" (Diderot 1883). Ludwig gives several examples of how his dramas were created from optical visions (almost hallucinations) of the stage action.[2] Wilhelm von Scholz claims that drama first starts to develop in the author's mind as a sequence of scenes in a certain space and time, and these are filled by the dialogues of the onstage characters only later and piecemeal (1914: 180). If Ludwig says that "the lyric poet delves into himself; the epic poet into his characters; and the dramatic poet into the actors of his characters" (1871),[3] this is also an expression of the priority of the stage vision, and it should be added that in many cases it was quite specific actors who gave rise to the dramatists' conception (for example Coquelin – Cyrano).[4] (Until the present this was the only way of capturing actors' personalities – compare the cinema!) This also confirms the general fact that the artist creating his work does not think abstractly

2 See Müller-Freienfels, Richard (1912) *Psychologie der kunst* [Psychology of Art], vol. I, Leipzig and Berlin: A. G. Teubner, p. 219; Binet, Alfred (1886) *La Psychologie du raisonnement* [Psychology of Reasoning], Paris: Germet Baillière, where Ernest Legouvé and Eugène Scribe's claim is to be found, as quoted in Bathe, Johannes (1916) "Leben und Bühne in der dramatischen Dichtung" [Life and the Stage in Dramatic Poetry], *Zeitschrift für Aesthetik u. allgemeine Kunstwissenschaft*, vol. 11, p. 304.

3 [Editor's note: We were not able to locate this quote in Ludwig 1871.]

4 [Editor's note: Benoît-Constant Coquelin (1841–1909), the most prominent French actor of his time. His Cyrano was famous both in its theatre and film versions.]

(in "ideas") but in terms of his material. For the dramatist, this material is actors (on the stage).

We see then that not even a reference to the origin of the dramatic work speaks in favour of literature; on the contrary, it shows that the original conception is related to actors and the stage, and that this guides the literary conception. The actors merely bring this original conception into being. The logical concurrence with the previous finding – that is, that the art of acting is the essential aspect of the dramatic work – is clear. A work of art should evoke in us those mental states (visions, ideas, emotions) that its creator had when creating them (that is as an artist, not as a person). In our case, the work of art is the actual performance, not the dramatic text (as read), and we see that this performance arises at the very start of the long process through which the dramatic work comes into existence. Naturally, the dramatist's vision of the work in performance is not and cannot be identical with the actual performance. Productions of the same work may be very different from each other, and yet all may be good. This is a consequence of the imperfect means available in the dramatic work for prescribing anything. The dramatist can only accomplish this by means of words – that is, only partially. However, this imperfection is not an aesthetic shortcoming, for it is this that offers creative freedom for those who bring the dramatic work into being. Indeed, even in music the score is never completely prescriptive and performing artists (virtuosos, conductors) enjoy the freedom arising from this by right. Thus every performance of a dramatic or musical work is a unique artistic event; herein is found considerable aesthetic appeal and great artistic value (the expression of the individuality of the performing artists). ...

After this analysis we can return to our initial standpoint, on the basis of which we intend to consider the completed dramatic work – that is, one that is performed and is perceived by us – and provide a positively worded formulation of the special position of the art of *acting* (that is, mimesis) within it as the first principle of dramatic art.

The principle of mimetic supremacy (that is, the principle of *dramaticality*). Through a comparison of various (performed) dramatic works we have found that the art of acting forms its necessary and essential part. The disinterested impression gained from every single performance in and of itself shows that the art of acting is the core and the basis of the dramatic work. This principle says that the art of acting is above all a *dramatic* art; the terms *mimetic* (in the broad sense of the word, comprising not only gestures and facial expressions but also speech) and *dramatic* should be considered identical. This will be addressed in the discussion of the essence of the art of acting. However, our principle says something more. This art of acting governs the dramatic work; it rules over all other aspects. All the other artistic aspects must subordinate themselves to the rules that guide the art of acting. The epithet "dramatic"

may be accorded them only when they are governed by the rules of the art of acting. Definitions of the "dramatic poem", the "dramatic stage" and "dramatic music" arise from an analysis of these aspects of the dramatic work.

Hence we again find ourselves rejecting the popular aesthetic use of the word "dramatic". In ordinary speech and casual writing the word is employed in a very broad sense; it is used (like the word "poetic") to conjure up a certain emotional impression, as synonymous with "exciting", "thrilling", "electrifying", "tempestuous" and so forth. Even in everyday life we speak of a "dramatic scene" or a "dramatic moment". This captures only one feature of the dramatic – a sensation of tension or excitement (or the release and dissipation of this emotion). This is a use both imprecise and unscholarly. *Too broad:* it comprises not only things that are extra-dramatic (a ballad is dramatic; an electrifying piece of music is dramatic) but also those that are extra-artistic. *Too narrow*: many truly dramatic phenomena (such as a light conversation piece) would not be covered. (And it is by this standard that the "dramatic" talent of an author or a musician is judged!)

A. ACTING

1. Whenever we recall our impressions of a theatre performance and ask ourselves what it was that triggered them first and foremost, we must acknowledge that it was the people represented on the stage and their actions. Both of these were created by the actors. So – to put it simply but exhaustively – the subject of the art of acting is *acting persons*.

These people are *real*; that is, they actually exist – which is what differentiates the art of acting from all other arts that represent people. A statue of a person is stone or bronze; a portrait is a painted canvas. People in a novel exist only in my imagination. Only acting represents people by people. In this case the material with which the artist creates is almost identical with what the artist is creating. I repeat, almost, since they are not identical. An actor is a real person though not, for example, a real king but an *unreal*, false one. This falsity also relates in many ways to the actor's makeup, wig, costume, and so on. There has been much philosophising about this. There is also a certain *artistic illusion* but this illusion – and this has to be borne in mind – is substantially different than in other artistic disciplines. The distance from "reality" is minimal, and this is often reflected in a temptation to view the illusion as reality. (Quite simple naive people in particular are capable of taking the theatre for reality.) This is also the psychological reason for the theatre's propensity for "illusionism", for naturalism.

What is this "acting person" for the audience from the psychological point of view? A phenomenon that is optical (visual), acoustic (auditory) and

kinetic (motor); I register it through an inner imitation of the person's movements and bearing, at least implicitly (innervations). The visual component comprises both his appearance (makeup, wig, costume) and his movements (gestures, facial and bodily mimicry, action). In this *double* (or triple) way we come to know the *character* (played by the actor) just as we come to know people in life.

And just as in life, where the determining feature when we think of a certain person is the visual appearance (whenever I think of Mr X, I see him in my mind in the first place), so it is in the theatre. The visual appearance is primary – of course the visual appearance in its temporal variability, in its (optically speaking) *play*.

The auditory manifestation of a character comprises all its acoustic aspects, both those that are inarticulate (laughter, groaning, and so on) and of course those in particular that are articulate, that is its *speech*. Speech is secondary in our perception. It is a rather abstract feature of the character and it only becomes more concrete when we can also see the person speaking; cf. the abstract nature of "a voice offstage".

What is the relation of acting and speech? Both are *complementary*, but in a quite specific way, allowing the exclusion of both as extreme forms.

"Acting" is either an expression of emotions (mimesis in the narrower sense of the word) or a manifestation of the will – that is, action in the narrower sense of the word. On the contrary, speech is either an expression of thoughts (communicating ideas) or an expression of emotions. In the expression of emotions both complement each other; the word demands gestures and vice versa. But rational speech does not require acting, and vice versa, action does not require words. In extreme cases, that is; in fact there is a smooth transition between categories. Hence the following schema:

Acting	0	Emotional gesticulation	Action
Speech	Rational speech	Emotional speech	0

It follows from the primacy of acting that rational speech is the least effective. Ruminations ("philosophizing") and especially narration are least dramatic since they require the least acting. The actors cannot enliven them with forceful acting (gesticulation). These are dead moments in the drama; unfortunately, at the beginning (the exposition), at least, they are almost necessary, but the fewer there are, the better. An absolute requirement for speech is that it be *comprehensible* to the audience (that is, not too faint or too fast or addressed away from it); otherwise it comes across as unnecessary and pointless. Very important for stylization!

In contrast to this, action as the supreme expression of the character is always dramatic, even though at its peak it does not require speech. Overly literary playwrights often trespass against this principle when they assume that everything that is acted needs to be announced ("Die!"). The lyrical mode is situated midway. ...

The character represented by the actor as an "acting person" is a *dramatic character*. For the actor to represent the character as a coherent individual, the *sum of his acting* and naturally of his *speech* (in the sense of the manner of speaking, not the ideas that are expressed!) must form an *incontestable whole*. For us then, psychologically speaking, the *dramatic character* is *the sum of the acting and speech* of the actor representing that character.

In a drama there are several such characters (two at least), since it deals with interaction between people. Every character has its individuality, which is guaranteed by the fact that each is created by a different actor (the prerequisite: a good one!). These dramatic characters can be seen as the basic elements of a dramatic work, and these are, I would say, static, since they pass through the entire work more or less unchanged. That, however, does not preclude partial development or even radical changes in characters' personalities. Naturally the continuity of the character must be maintained; all action and all changes must be psychologically justified. This is the law of *psychological truth*, internal rather than external ("nobody would act like that"). If the law is broken at some point, we are unable to make a synthesis of the character's features; we fail to understand the character, and it comes across as flawed or unclear. Nevertheless the flaw may also be in us – that we are unable to understand, for instance, the strength of some particular motivation. One must therefore be very cautious in these judgements. Nonetheless, we generally understand every (well-performed) character intuitively – through putting ourselves in its place, through empathy. Unity is continuity. ... On the other hand, the *external* truthfulness of a character (that is, whether such a person can exist) is unnecessary: plays also contain supernatural and symbolic characters, personifications, animals, and so on.

2. We also understand the mutual relationships of the dramatic characters in a dual fashion. Visually this relationship is the onstage *situation* – which is a changing one. Acoustically it is the *dialogue.* Both take place in time and create the material for the construction of the *dramatic action.*

Given that we have defined "dramatic character" as an acting person, we may define "*dramatic action*" as (mutual) *human action*. We are therefore dealing not with abstract action, a story that may be recounted (as in the narrative mode), but with a concrete action created through the situations of people and their dialogues. The salient feature of dramatic action is that it occurs *in real time*. However, this time is also "unreal", false, since, for example, the declared "action at the time of the French Revolution" takes place in the

present – yet in this "present" lies its full reality. Dramatic action is so bound to time that it cannot be speeded up, slowed down, shortened or transposed (previous for later). In contrast to this, the narrative storyline, for instance in a novel, takes place in a time that is merely notional and can be treated fairly freely. The author may, for instance, provide part of a dialogue and add "and they spent the rest of the day in such talk", or sum up action taking place over a long time in a few words, at the beginning of a chapter narrate what preceded, and so forth.

We may also read a narrative rapidly or slowly, stopping anywhere and proceeding at our leisure – but in taking in dramatic action we are bound quite strictly. This close link with time manifests itself most clearly in dramatic action requiring a very specific tempo (in a specific place) and very specific changes of tempo (dramatic progression), be they sudden or gradual. In this respect it is in complete accord with music, which is also bound to real time in such a close fashion. A poem may be read quickly or slowly without apparent loss, but "reading", for instance, the slow movement of a musical composition quickly would turn it into a caricature. We have to imagine it at its proper tempo if we are to understand it correctly. If we are to understand drama fully when reading, we must also read it in this way, or imagine it being performed. It is only the curtain that breaks up the continuous action of the play as if constructing it in some way, and the intermission is arbitrary – the next act may continue where the previous one left off, or "20 years later".

Dramatic action – human action, visually represented and perceived – is created through the development of situations and dialogues. The glue that gives it continuity is, once again, psychological causality. The motivations of individuals' actions are not only internal but also external – the influence of one person on another. Here too the law of *psychological truth* holds: the progress of the action must be governed by psychological laws, otherwise it would come across as incomprehensible, strained or impossible. It must be emphasized that this truthfulness is grounded in the possibility of our understanding it, that is understanding it noetically, and has nothing to do with any relation to reality, that is, to the question whether this action is "possible" in the light of our experience. For there are also dramatic fairy tales and such like. Therefore it is only psychological truth – with relation to both dramatic characters as well as dramatic action – that is the necessary and *absolute* requirement.

The elements of dramatic action, (changing) situations and dialogues, create the *dynamic* (moving) elements of the dramatic work through their being carried out in real time. These elements evoke in us quite specific moods: excitement and tension, emotional release and relaxation, with different intensities, different manners of proceeding, different lengths and different kinds of alternation. It follows from the above schema of the relation

between acting and speech that the peaks of dramatic action are always determined by action, by deeds – and that this does not involve words: the word precedes and follows. We have also noted that narrative passages are passages where dramatic flow comes to a halt. Lyrical passages (corresponding to the combination of emotional gesture and emotional speech) are situated midway, signifying a loosening of dramatic movement. This is not meant as denigration: on the contrary, they are necessary for achieving alternation and contrast in the dynamic effect of the work. However, there should not be too many of them (as in lyrical drama), lest the action become too drawn out (the requirement of dramatic progression, brevity). It is only through contrast that a strong moment stands out, and after a strong moment weaker impressions are required in order to prevent fatigue and insensitivity. These are psychological laws that a dramatic work as a work in real time has to observe, just like music. Not inappropriately, we speak of the *rhythm* of dramatic action, by which is meant this alternation – an alternation that occurs in large temporal blocks, something like temporal waves. However, this is no more than a metaphorical expression and it is better to follow the lead of music (where real "rhythm" is present in the true sense of the word) and speak of the *dynamic architecture* or *structure* of the drama.

Creating dramatic action in its temporal structure (rhythm) cannot be the task of the individual actors, since is the product of their interacting with one another. It is the artistic task of the *director.*

B. LITERATURE

The playwright already has a vision of the dramatic characters and the dramatic action at the time of the conception of the play and while putting it down on paper. He can capture only a modest (though significant) part of his vision through the use of words: the *direct speech of the characters with each other* ("dialogues"). In respect of the two dramatic values mentioned above the creation of the text by the playwright involves two types of synthesis.

a) The playwright captures the dramatic character as the *sum of the lines* delivered by that character in the play. Externally, this sum takes the form of the "role" that the actor receives in written form. The sum of these lines must form a *unified and distinctive whole*. This unity relates both to the psychological (though not logical) coherence of all the lines of dialogue as well as to the unified *nature* of the speech, from which the mentality of the individual may be inferred. This concerns both the contents and the formal side of the speech (the syntax, and so on), which of course cohere in many points. An educated person speaks about certain things, an uneducated person about other things – for example a master and a servant. ... A passionate person

speaks differently from someone who is phlegmatic; a frivolous chatterbox talks differently from an introverted eccentric.

From the sum of these lines of dialogue (of a single character) the actor has to intuit its personality. The more distinctive the sum, the easier it is for him, since the actor is creating a specific character and therefore needs very specific (individual) source material – and even so the material provides only part of the features. If on the contrary the lines given by the playwright to the character are no more than schematic, the "person" is also schematic and the actor's task is difficult and unrewarding.

The other part – that is, the character's action, facial expressions, gestures, gait, physiognomy (makeup and hair) – must be provided by the actor; this sum of acting also has to form a whole in itself (as has been already mentioned) and has to be in agreement with the whole presented in the lines by the playwright. But also, as far as the lines found in the text are concerned, the actor has to create their spoken form, that is, the way the text is delivered, and of course this has to be done in agreement with the character presented. So not even in relation to the text is an actor a mere reproductive artist, as is the case of a reciter. A reciter – the author's surrogate – delivers a certain passage according to the nature of its contents and atmosphere. An actor speaks a certain passage according to the *overall* concept of the dramatic *character*; consideration of the contents and the atmosphere of the passage takes second place, or rather they are modified in a particular direction in line with the overall concept.

The characters captured verbally by the author must be not only unified and distinctive but also *different* from one another. This is a difficult task and it depends on the author's ability – which is what makes him a dramatist – to get inside the skin of a character and to transform his self into another. This is also an ability that an actor must have, but whereas an actor here focuses on how to play his role, the dramatist must focus mainly on the character's speech. A special difficulty for the dramatist is that he creates all the characters in the play while the actor creates only one. It is therefore not enough for the author to empathize subjectively with all his characters; he must also objectivize them, rid himself of them, rid them of any connection to his own person. Of course he can only do this to a certain extent. If this is too limited, the drama is too subjective and all the characters are similar to one another and similar to their creator. The author may also project his self onto one of the play's characters, though in a different outer form (Molière: *The Misanthrope*; Goethe: *Torquato Tasso*).

b) The playwright captures the dramatic action through the sum of all the lines of dialogue as they follow one another – that is, through the whole dramatic text. This sum, too, must be unified and consistent (psychologically justified). However, the dramatic action is present in it only *potentially*

and incompletely (since a part of the dramatic action is also present in the dialogues!): the other aspect, the acting (the action of the characters), is only suggested by the author in a limited and general manner through stage directions. Fixing the dramatic action in time, and doing this precisely, putting in place its temporal structure, its "rhythm", is the task of the director. Here, too, the playwright provides only incidental instructions regarding the intensity and tempo of the speech and the acting. The exact dynamics has to be intuited from the meaning and the mood of the *dialogues*. Each dialogue contains a certain tension originating from the division into the two characters (a "split" understanding); we apprehend a statement made by either of them as at the same time an *effect* on the other. In addition to a dynamic effect, dialogues also have a static atmospheric effect deriving from the contents of the dialogues (atmospheric words and notions, jokes, and so on) or perhaps the literary style (for example metaphors, word repetition). These atmospheric effects are most evident in lyrical passages, where they compensate for the diminished dynamic effect of such moments. Lyrical drama in particular makes ample use and even excessive use of them (Maeterlinck: word repetition and so on); music, which has a great emotional effect, likes to draw out such lyrical, atmospheric passages ("arias", "duets", in particular love duets). But the dynamic performance of the dramatic action, too, relies on the effect of the content and mood of the dialogues, so both are usually in agreement, though sometimes they are also in contrast, which then creates a particularly strong dramatic moment, for instance serious or even sad things in a light dialogue (tragic humour) or, on the other hand, petty things in a serious dialogue (an effective source of comedy). Certainly it is necessary to distinguish these effects clearly. *Narrative* passages in a dramatic work usually lack even (static) atmospheric effect, and as such are totally dead in the water.

The dramatic action is unified but certainly not simple. Every dramatic character acts in the course of the drama – if the character appears onstage – in his or her particular way; these are *partial dramatic actions* out of which the overall action is composed, as though from interwoven threads. (Partial dramatic action is different from personal action. This is not to draw an explicit distinction between *ideational* or *imagined events*, in which more characters participate, and *personal action*, from both of which the dramatic action is spun. Only the latter actions are visible. This does not affect the following argument.) However, the individual partial dramatic actions are not equally significant but depend on the relative importance of the characters. Also the interrelations of these partial actions are different. Against the *action of the main character* (the "hero" of the piece), which usually runs through the whole dramatic work, there is usually the action of the hero's opponent. These are *opposing* actions and therefore they occasionally intersect (as plotlines) –

forcefully or more mildly. Each of them is associated with the actions of characters who share their intentions – whether coerced or voluntary – and these *parallel actions* may run through the entire piece (especially the actions of go-betweens, plotters) or only function for a certain time. And naturally this parallel action may be independent to a greater or lesser extent, so that at times it even turns into a third basic action, which may perhaps intersect with the other two (for example the action of a cunning servant, carried out to benefit his master but also on his own accord). Alternatively, a "counterplay" may be created by several persons of relatively equal weight so that it is only their sum (of the parallel actions) that acts as a counterweight to the hero's action. Or alongside the main play and counterplay there may arise a secondary play and counterplay, relatively independent and less significant (mostly from the ethical point of view), and so on.

In this respect drama is very similar to music. Only drama and music are capable of presenting us with two actions or two musical ideas completely simultaneously; this is based on the fact that only these two arts take place in real time. We are *forced to perceive simultaneously* both aspects (for example, the play and the counterplay in the dialogue), something that the novel, for instance, does *not* require. We may figuratively call this phenomenon *dramatic polyphony*. ... There is another similarity to voices in music: in parallel (even homophonically, for example in thirds) and in counterpoint. But the specificity of dramatic polyphony is that (1) every partial play has two aspects, in that it also contains speech; (2) the acting and the speech of the same character need not move in the same direction (hypocrisy; a supposed friend!).

To sum up these conclusions, we may say that the attribute "dramatic" belongs in reality to the performances of the actors (together with the input of the director); however, since the text created by the dramatist is the basic component of their work, the attribute may be transferred to the text under the following conditions.

A *dramatic text* (literary work) is one that offers the actors (and the director) the *source material* for the creation of dramatic characters and dramatic action (for the definitions of both terms see above). The better it serves this task, the more dramatic it is.

N. B.: With respect to artistic evaluation, since "dramaticality" proper is an *aesthetic* judgment, the source material should be *original* (that is, the source material for the creation of an original character) and *rich* (that is, offering sufficient freedom for the various actors' interpretations); often the latter requirement is also met by "literary" templates ("types").

Dramaticality is therefore a quality that a given text (literary work) may possess to varying degrees, as reality attests. But there are *necessary* conditions for this, most commonly the form of direct speech itself. That, however, is not enough to ensure dramaticality. It would certainly be possible to stage,

for instance, Plato's dialogues, but what we would experience would not be "drama" because there would be little human action. The dialogic form is also popular in the novel, since it stirs our imagination. (Such is also the case, for example, with the ballad. Here there is "dramaticality" in the popular sense, that is excitement provided by the quick pace of the narrative and the sombre material.) It is, however, only one of several available forms (for example the framing story, the epistolary novel, and so on). From the extreme case of such a philosophical dialogue a long series of "closet dramas" leads to proper "theatrical" dramas. The degree of "dramaticality" (in our sense) rises steadily, and in addition with any particular drama it varies *within certain limits* because (by definition) it depends not only on the dramatic abilities of the playwright but also on the creative abilities of the actors and the director in a particular stage production.

C. THE STAGE

The theatre stage is a *space* in which *dramatic characters materialize the dramatic action*. What follows most importantly from this is that the stage is a real space, actual and not just imaginary. The *dramatic characters* are represented by actors, who are of course real, material people whom we also apprehend as such. This is a key point of difference from the visual arts, which also present us – for instance in a historical painting – with people, but these people are not only unreal but also immaterial; their representation is flat, two-dimensional, and an impression of materiality and three-dimensionality is only created in us through illusion, based on certain pictorial devices, in particular perspective and modelling through light and shade. What is closer to the stage in this sense is sculpture, which also presents an unreal human but at least one that is corporeal, three-dimensional; we are also aware of the materiality of the statue: it is not an illusion. However, there are substantial differences between a statue and an actor, which will be discussed below.

The *dramatic action* that takes place between dramatic characters, too, necessarily requires a real, three-dimensional space – only here can actors exist and perform – and the spectators have no choice but to view this space as real and three-dimensional since that is how they perceive the actors. The reality, the realness, of the stage space is not at odds with the fact that the space is not identical to the one being represented; we are of course aware of this distinction in the theatre. We know that the space in which the action takes place is in fact "the stage", for example of the National Theatre, and not "a room in a middle-class flat", "the Old Town Square", "a forest" or whatever else it "represents". The stage is a real space, then, but in view of its specific

purpose "false", in the same way that this is true of the actor as a dramatic character.

What has been said of space is equally true of the *light* that fills the stage and in fact creates it for the audience, as it conditions their visual impression. This light too is real, actual and not just painted, as is the case for instance of a painting of a room or a landscape. In this respect the stage approximates another visual art, architecture, which also operates with real light in its spaces. And of course stage light is – like almost everything in the theatre – mostly fake; in our age, the light is almost always electric, "representing" sunshine or moonlight or artificial light, for example the light of a paraffin lamp, a torch, and so on.

A case that might seem to contradict the realness of the stage space – and partly also of the light that creates it – is when the stage is meant to represent a space of endless depth, a distant view. It is obvious that an open space like this cannot be created within the limitations of the stage and therefore illusion has to be employed: distant space, stretching out without end, is painted on the backdrop. This substitute for a real space that cannot be created in practical terms is psychologically justified because even in reality a distant view seems like a flat image. But no objections can be raised against it aesthetically either, since it is not at odds with the above definition of the stage. This seemingly distant space is no longer the stage because no acting takes place – or can take place – there, nor do we consider it part of the stage. (Often dramatists do not realise this obvious fact, for instance by having their characters "move off into the distance" or "appear in the distance", which of course cannot be done.) In this case it only appears that the stage, at other times completely enclosed, is *extended* in depth: the space into which it extends is no longer a part of it, and it is therefore irrelevant whether it is real or is to be so. The visual art of painting is used here – for purely practical reasons, as has been stated – to achieve the illusion of wide open space, but this in no way means that the stage itself is therefore illusionistic or realistic. Spatial illusion must be distinguished from physical illusion; we understand, for example, that the open landscape on a backdrop like this may be rendered in as stylized a fashion as the painter wishes.

A similar principle holds in the case of the materiality of any properties and objects on the stage itself. It is certain that, for instance, a chair that is to be sat on must be – and can be as well – really material. But trees – for instance in a scene representing a wood – may to a certain extent be material, corporeal, but they need not be. It is enough if they are painted so that an illusion of materiality is created in us. This illusion is not only justified but in accordance with the aesthetic law of unity it is necessary: in the three-dimensional stage space, in which three-dimensional, material people operate, all other objects must be three-dimensional, material, or at least create such

an impression. There is no need to point out that this material illusion does not mean stage illusionism or realism, and therefore the objects in question, for example trees, may be stylized at will.

To sum up, it may be said that a stage is a real three-dimensional space containing real, material objects (the acting persons in the first place, but others as well); for practical reasons the use of things that create merely an illusion of space or materiality (such as backdrops, flats, and so on) is allowed. Not only is this dual illusion not anti-artistic, but on the contrary it is an imperative that follows from the aesthetic law of the unity of the stage, and it is not even an instance of stage realism or illusionism in the strict sense of the word. (Often theories of painting, too, claim that a painting that creates an illusion of space or materiality is *eo ipso* naturalistic and therefore non-artistic, a view that is incorrect and caused by a lack of clarity with regard to concepts. However, in the visual arts, a painting may be conceived of as existing either in an (apparent) space or on a surface; to recognize only one is a product of unjustified dogmatism. As we have seen, on the stage such an alternative does not exist.)

Having outlined the nature of the theatre stage, we are faced with the task of determining which artistic discipline the stage should be classed with. First and foremost, it is obvious that we perceive the stage through sight. The characters portrayed by the actors as dramatic characters, their action and interaction – all these are purely visual impressions. The stage is therefore a visual form of art and as such is close to the *visual arts*. Earlier we have in fact compared the stage and what fills it with sculpture and then with architecture, though in each case we also pointed out major differences. Finally, we have spoken at some length about the importance of painting for the stage, but here the conclusion was that its relation to the stage is merely ancillary; it only helps out for practical reasons, sometimes substituting illusion for reality. Our task now is to examine systematically the relation between the stage and the visual arts. This issue is of crucial importance as soon as there arises the question of according the stage genuine artistic values. These artistic values must certainly be visual, and it is therefore natural to think of artistic values offered "ready made" by the various visual arts. This explains why the purifying reaction that arose at the turn of the twentieth century against tasteless and wholly unartistic theatrical illusionism declared the stage to be a visual work of art and as a result tried to apply to it the rules of the visual arts. Though in practice this movement has played a major role in improving the stage artistically, its theoretical principles cannot be accepted.

The stage is not a work of visual art. A brief analysis will support this claim. First and foremost the particular *dramatic character* represented on stage by the actor is not, from the visual point of view, a work of art and has no artistic values such as those of, for example, a sculpture or a painting of a person.

The beauty of an actor or an actress is undoubtedly a certain advantage but it is not a condition for the artistry of their performance; besides it is always natural beauty, not artistic beauty. (This physical beauty is not only a social advantage, contributing – sometimes undeservedly – to the popularity of an actor or actress, but also a technical advantage, just like a beautiful voice. In numerous plays the beauty of dramatic characters, in particular women, is the occasion for romantic relations and therefore also the driving force of the action – for example *Romeo and Juliet*.) With most dramatic characters it is a question of a distinctive appearance rather than of beauty; often certain characters – especially in comedies – should even be unattractive to the point of being a source of ridicule (for example Falstaff). But the actor, wishing to create the appearance demanded by the dramatic character he is playing, puts on makeup and a costume and this is certainly an artificial creation. However, the purpose of all this is to capture the distinctive features of the dramatic character, and therefore it has – if successful – dramatic artistic values, not those relating to the visual arts. This also follows from the fact that the makeup and costume are closely connected with the actor's mimicry, in particular his facial expressions, forming no more than a constant component of his changing appearance, and also that the change the makeup and costumes make in the actor's appearance varies greatly, from considerable to virtually none at all. It could be objected that certain aspects of characterization are also present in the above-mentioned works of art (sculptures and paintings of people). But the principal difference is that in the creation of the actor's makeup and costume the characterization of the character is the first requirement while in the visual arts it is the second – that is, it is something that may be in evidence but does not need to be so, because it is the purely visual qualities that are crucial and necessary. To demonstrate this, let us think of an actor representing, for example, King Lear, superbly costumed and made up, and let us imagine that the actor is photographed at a moment when he is expressing some kind of mental turmoil in a spell-binding fashion – a fit of anger or madness. Will this photograph – which on the surface can easily be compared to, for example, an etching, a valuable visual work of art – will this photograph be a visual work of art itself? Certainly not.

It must nevertheless be acknowledged that in this depiction of a person's state of mind there is a point of contact between acting and some works of art. However, it is really no more than a *point*; the above-mentioned works of art – statues and paintings of people (and not even all of them!) – portray only one moment, while acting presents the whole *process* of a certain mental sensation or action, one that develops over the course of time. In this development, in this change, lies the essential quality of the actor's performance. A dramatic character's momentary pose has no qualities of its own, but only as a point of transition between what preceded and what follows, for example

as the culmination of a steady or sudden gradation. It is only in the whole process that its meaning and value lie; what we are clearly dealing with here is a purely dramatic quality, which in this case manifests itself visually, that is visibly.

The same holds for the *ensemble of characters* filling the stage. Here, too, the positioning of the characters is not governed by the rules of visual art, as it would be with a painting, but solely by dramatic laws. Through these visible *spatial* relations between individual characters (close to or distant from one another, and so on) as well as between the characters and the stage (downstage, upstage, stage left, and so on), the psychological relationships between dramatic characters are expressed visually, as are the weight and nature of their partial dramatic action within the whole of the dramatic action – moment by moment. The stage is therefore not a "painting", as it is usually perceived and as Diderot was the first to call for. However, Diderot's demand arose in reaction to the way classical French drama was performed in his time. In strict accordance with the view that drama is poetry, all that he sought was for this drama to be declaimed properly (in accordance with the taste of the age, of course) and for all the poetic beauties of the poem to be fully expressed; at most there might also be the individual facial expressions and gestures of the various actors. Diderot called for the ensemble filling the stage to be shaped artistically and he formulated this plea by saying that the stage should, at any given moment, form an image worthy of a painter. This was a very wholesome reform, and what is more, Diderot's demand should be recognized as – completely correct, without its contradicting our former statement that the stage is not an image. The reason for this is that Diderot was a good theorist of drama but not of the visual arts – even though he was the first modern critic of the visual arts. He called for a painting to have poetic and dramatic qualities, passing over purely visual qualities. If we were to accept his ideal of a painting we could fully agree with his demand for staging. But we will not do so because we view a painting somewhat differently. Still it cannot be denied that in a figural painting the painter also seeks to position the figures according to their psychological relationships and the importance they have in the action. However, in a good painting this requirement is secondary, the primary requirement being the effort to arrange the elements of colour and shape in the painting in such a way that the satisfaction they offer is purely visual, with no regard for what they mean. Observing this requirement and in addition fulfilling the aforementioned one – this is the problem that makes the group painting the most difficult genre in the painter's art.

Diderot's problem – as one may call the question of the relation of the theatre stage to the visual arts – was correctly resolved by Diderot himself, but incorrectly formulated. This means that the consequences for the stage

that Diderot deduced from his claims are correct; on the contrary, it would be wholly incorrect to deduce consequences for the stage from our conception of the visual image, as happens so often. Diderot also recognized that the stage "image" changes over time; rather interestingly, he considered it a *sequence* of images following one after another, always with a small difference – something that in fact happens in the modern cinema. Diderot was well aware of the dramatic qualities stemming from the nature of this change over time – sometimes gradual, sometimes sudden, and sometimes even coming to a standstill. We say that this is the visible rhythm of the changing stage, visually expressing the dramatic rhythm of the action, and that, like the preceding case, no single point in the stage action has any value in itself, but only as a transitional point between what we have seen before and what we shall see after it. So, for instance, we regard the proximity of two characters to one another or their placement downstage as a result of their convergence or movement to the fore – sometimes speedy, sometimes slow – which gives them a different nature and significance in each case, though the resulting "image" is the same. This rhythm of change on the stage, sometimes gradual, sometimes precipitous, sometimes almost coming to a standstill, at others wildly oscillating, is a dynamic quality and we do in fact experience it in real time. On the contrary, in a painting representing a scene we regard the positioning of the figures as a static impression; and although we may sometimes imagine what has preceded and what would follow after the moment captured in the painting, it is no more than a thought, a mere suggestion – there can be no talk of experiencing any rhythm. If in the case of a painting reference is made to its being "dramatic", this is used in the lay sense of the word, which simply equates with emotion, whether the mere emotional nature of the action represented in the work and the persons participating in it or in addition – in a good work – the visual impact of the colours, the interplay of light and shadow and line present in the painting.

So *the essence of the stage* is that *the dynamic effect of the drama* (the dramatic characters and the dramatic action) *is distributed and ordered spatially* on it, *visually transcribed* onto the stage space, as it were. The dramatic characters represented by the actors are something like shifting *power nodes*, their intensity varying in accordance with both the importance of individual characters and the momentary situation. Their psychological relations, shaped by the plot and the situation, are something like *lines of force* pulsating between them. The stage is filled with the network of these lines of force, is a kind of *force field*, changeable in shape and in the strength of its individual components. The effects of this dynamic field are transmitted to the audience; this is *dramatic tension*.

It is very interesting that we also encounter a quite similar configuration in the visual arts themselves. Every piece of architecture is also a dynamic

field, a network of lines of force. Here, however, it is a case of mechanical forces, of the weight of matter manifesting itself as compression and tension, and of the firmness and flexibility of the material resisting this. These forces and counterforces are in complete balance: the weight of a vault lies on a column, but the column lifts it up and supports it. So when looking at architecture (most clearly at a Gothic cathedral) we experience the powerful tension that is present there, but the *resultant* impression is one of calm, not of movement. In contrast, the force field of the theatre stage is mobile, in a constant state of change and flow, and it is first of all a field of psychological, not mechanical, forces. (A mobile field of mechanical forces with an aesthetic charge is also possible; such impressions arise, for example, inside a gigantic engineering plant.) The forces we sense here are not real, actual, but only imagined, symbolic. Indeed, does it not seem to us that, between two lovers who find themselves alone on the stage and free from care, a kind of psychological force clicks into place that drives them irresistibly towards one other? And do we not feel at their parting how hard it is for them to separate and how great an effort they have to make to overcome the power of mutual attraction? And do we not, on the contrary, sense the repellent force between two enemies, a force that drives them apart and is overcome only through the brutal force of their thirst for revenge? (Even in life these symbolic notions are common: some people attract us, others repulse us; the tie of friendship binds us, and so on.)

We have said that the dynamic effect of the drama is not only distributed on the stage but is also *ordered*. This means that it is regulated according to laws in terms of both spatial distribution as well as its development in time. The sole possible basis for this order is the dramatic work itself, conceived as a whole; to achieve this is the primary artistic task of the director. This task is specific to the director, separate from the roles of the individual actors. Actors create their action, the director creates their interaction; it is wrong for one of the parties to usurp the rights of the other. If individual actors wish to decide how to interact with one other, the overall unity of the performance is lost, the whole disintegrates, and soon there is artistic anarchy. And the other way round, if a director prescribes how the individual actors should act, their individuality is limited, the actors turn into puppets and the theatre play, which should be an artistic organism, turns into a mechanism, no matter however skilfully it is operated. (Towards young actors, a director has the obligation – and with it therefore the right – to mentor; however, here too this is more a matter of advising than of dictating.) As an old aesthetic maxim has it: in the former case there is variety without unity; in the latter unity without variety; sooner or later, both lead to the artistic degeneration of the theatre.

Dramatic characters and their relationships – these form the *essence* of what fills the stage; what is on the stage besides this is insignificant, acciden-

tal. In some cases all that a play needs is merely the neutral space of a stage (naturally a space delimited by a firm frame). This *scenic frame*, marking off the stage space from below, from above and from the sides as well as from behind, is for the main part *relatively unchanging* (for the entire play, for an entire act or a part of an act) and it is an architectural work. Often, however, the dramatic work requires that the stage space be defined more clearly; this is done either by the choice and design of the movable part of the scenic frame (flats, backdrops) or by objects that are placed on the stage and that may come into actual physical contact with the dramatic characters (furniture, and so on). All these things have, in the first place, a logical significance, helping the spectator to understand the dramatic work. In addition, they also have an aesthetic significance, helping to shape the mood. The very size and shape of the stage space (a small or a large stage, whether it is shallow or deep) have a specific atmospheric quality; all the more so the qualities of colour, light or shapes used in framing and filling the space. These qualities, relatively unchanging (as has been noted above), are qualities of the visual arts and of architecture in particular. The role of architecture is to create spaces, interiors – and the theatre stage is, when all is said and done, always an interior. The mood of these relatively unchanging qualities of the stage must correspond to the *overall* mood of the particular part of the dramatic work for which they are conceived. As against the changing, dynamic effect of the stage, which was discussed earlier, this creates its stable, *static* effect – a constant accompaniment to the changing impression created by the action. Its great importance lies in this synthetic power, which turns an act or part of an act into a distinctive unit. From what has been said it is clear that the task of creating such a relatively unchanging scenic frame lies with the architect, that is, an artist gifted with the creative abilities that are specific to architecture. But of course a specific qualification for working in the theatre must be that he have an understanding of the *dramatic* values of theatrical works, since it is these that he translates into a visual language – or to be more precise, an architectural language. (In contrast, an artist with a talent that is purely painterly cannot be a good stage designer, as he does not comprehend stage space, which is after all the main thing.)

A special role on the theatre stage is reserved for light. Works of architecture, too, use real light to shape their spaces. But theatre light is very fluid; it can be fully controlled and it gives the director the ability to change the illumination and therefore the mood of the stage even when the curtain is up – that is, even when the aforementioned framing of the stage cannot be changed. It follows from this that theatre light not only provides the stage with static atmospheric qualities, lyrical qualities, but that it is also capable of following the rhythm of the action, participating in its temporal development, dramatic progression, culmination, gradual or sudden changes – that

is to say, light also creates the dynamic qualities of the stage. This capacity is highly important in that even within the same scenic frame the light follows the stage rhythm in general outline and underscores its significant moments, in this way *structuring,* in broad outline, each segment of the drama. Theatre light, then, transcribes into its visual language both the lyrical and the dramatic qualities of the work, and it is therefore – in principle – for spoken drama what music is for opera.

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ON THE CURRENT STATE OF THE THEORY OF THEATRE

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["K dnešnímu stavu teorie divadla", a lecture given at the Circle of Friends of D 41 – that is, of E. F. Burian's Theatre D, in the 1940–1941 season – and published in 1941 in *Program D 41*, vol. 7, pp. 229–42. The English translation, "On the Current State of the Theory of Theater", was published in Burbank, John and Steiner, Peter (trans. and eds) (1978) *Structure, Sign and Function*, New Haven: Yale University Press, pp. 201–19.]

One of the important problems facing the contemporary theatre, and one that is being approached in various ways, is how to establish active contact between the spectator and the stage. Of course the prime responsibility for dealing with this problem lies with the theatre itself, its directors and its actors. And indeed, these individuals have made many attempts to "draw" the spectator into the play in some fashion. The results have been interesting and artistically valuable, but for the most part they have not been very effective as far as their desired goal has been concerned. There is, however, a second party in the theatre: the auditorium and the spectators sitting in it, that is, those who are supposed to be aroused to activity. They, too, have been considered, but for the most part not as a specific community of people frequenting such and such a theatre but as representatives of a social whole. The problem is then shifted to that of the relationship between the theatre and society. We know well enough the profound but in practical terms largely unproductive reflections on how the necessary precondition for intensive contact and full understanding between the theatre and society is the spontaneous unity of a world view and of religious and ethical feeling. Examples include ancient Greece, the Middle Ages and so forth.

But it is not the entire society of a particular time, of a particular nation, that frequents the theatre, especially the contemporary theatre; rather it is an audience, that is, a community that is often very heterogeneous socially (not only in terms of social strata alone but also profession, age, and so on) but on the other hand linked together by a bond of perceptivity to the art of the theatre. The audience is always a mediator between art and society as a whole: literature, painting, music and the other arts also require an audience, that is, a set of individuals with an inherited or acquired ability to adopt an aesthetic

attitude toward the material with which a given art works.[1] The "theatre audience" in general, however, is still too broad and relatively abstract a notion. Every theatre, especially the theatre of a distinctive artistic movement, has its own audience, which is familiar with the artistic complexion of the theatre, follows actors from play to play, from role to role, and so on. And this is an important precondition for the audience to take an active stance toward the theatre, leading to one of the most efficacious paths toward "drawing the spectator into the play". It depends on the director's artistic intentions whether he wishes to remove the physical boundary between the stage and the auditorium. Even when this boundary is preserved, however, the relationship between the theatre and the audience is bilaterally active if the audience accepts spontaneously and in full measure the artistic conventions upon which the theatre, and precisely the particular theatre in question, builds its performance. Only in such a case can we expect the audience's reaction to the stage action to become itself an active force that is tacitly but effectively incorporated into the actual theatrical performance. It is well known how sensitively the stage reacts to the understanding and the mood hovering over a silent auditorium.

The effort by the Circle of Friends of D 41[2] to bring the fundamentals of the theatre closer to the audience through a series of lectures, most of which will be delivered by artists active in D 41, therefore seems to be a good beginning for the audience's path to the theatre. On the stage, artistic intention can only be embodied, not explicitly explained. All the work that brought it to life remains hidden from the spectator, yet awareness of it could substantially facilitate his understanding. The performance itself is already too homogeneous a whole, and it is not easy to penetrate its construction, to see it from within. During a performance it seems quite natural that a particular word in the text is pronounced in a certain way or is accompanied by a certain gesture, that its effect manifests itself in a particular manner in the facial expressions, gestures and movements of the other actors, and so on. But during rehearsals the spectator would see that the connection of a word with a gesture, and so forth, is the result of a deliberate selection from many possibilities, that no component of theatre follows automatically from another, that a theatrical performance is a very complex and dangerously fluid composition. If the spectator is enlightened about the origin of a theatrical performance by those who take an active part in theatre work every day, he too will be able to find

1 An affinity for a certain material is not at all general, and it is rare to find an individual, no matter how strong his aesthetic sensibility, who is capable of being part of the audiences of all the arts. A feeling for the aesthetic effect of words is not necessarily connected with a feeling for the artistic effect of colours, tones, and so forth.

2 [Editorial note (1978): D 41 was an avant-garde theatre originally founded by E. F. Burian in 1933. The "D" stands for the Czech word *divadlo* (theatre). The number refers to the calendar year of the second half of a particular theatrical season, in this case 1940–1941.]

a place for himself in the stage performance, which as it unfolds only seems to be limited to the stage: in reality it always pervades the entire theatre.

The organizers of this lecture series have also deemed it appropriate that a few words be devoted to the theory of theatre. By no means, of course, can a systematic exposition of all its problems be presented here, nor is there any need for this. We have only a single theoretical task: to show through a few remarks and examples that despite all the material tangibility of its means (the building, machinery, sets, props, a multitude of personnel), the theatre is merely the base for a non-material interplay of forces moving through time and space and sweeping the spectator up in its changing tension, in the interplay of forces we call a stage performance. The theoretical preconditions for such a view of the theatre are advanced in the contemporary theory of theatre and specifically in the Czech theory of theatre. The Czech theory of theatre is frequently the object of much criticism, justified, to be sure, as far as an enumeration of the tasks that should be fulfilled is concerned, but it would not be fair to criticize its past as well. I have in mind primarily a work that appeared recently, Otakar Zich's *The Aesthetics of Dramatic Art* (1931). In this work the theatre is viewed in its entire breadth and complexity as a dynamic interplay of all its components, as a unity of forces internally differentiated by reciprocal tensions and as a set of signs and meanings. The theoretical works of Petr Bogatyrev, Jindřich Honzl, E. F. Burian and several younger thinkers are based on the same conception of the theatre.

But even the generation before Zich made a substantial contribution to our knowledge of the essence of the theatre. It suffices to mention two recently deceased theatre critics, Jindřich Vodák and Václav Tille. In their formative years they experienced the powerful transformative turbulence – viewed from close at hand, almost chaos – through which the European theatre has passed since the final decades of the last century and which, in fact, has still not ended. In this country the course of theatrical development was even more unsettled, because influences from several countries – especially Germany, France and Russia – burst through and intermingled at the same time. It is certain that this haste also had its negative consequences. Unelaborated and not fully digested conceptions were abandoned for other, newer ones; various conceptions were blended in an artistically "impure" manner; sometimes only the external features of a particular conception of the theatre were adopted rather than its essence, and so forth. On the other hand, however, there was a positive side – a heightened perceptiveness to the multiple complexity of the theatre and the mutual counterbalancing of its components. If we read Václav Tille's *Memories of the Theatre* (1917), we encounter a critic at ease with all forms of theatrical expression, whether he is giving an account of the French, Russian, German or Japanese theatre or finds himself dealing with a form in which the actor predominates or another in

which the focal point of the play lies in the stage set or finally a third, where the vehicle is the director. He knows how to distinguish precisely between a system of acting that works mainly with gestures and one dependent on declamation. He grasps the almost imperceptible boundary at which gestures turn into facial expressions, and so on. This cultivated perceptivity had already paved the way for the thinker who was to give the Czech theory of theatre its first example of a systematic and philosophically consistent elaboration of the fundamentals of the theatre, namely Otakar Zich. It is important to realize that the way was paved by the local development of artistic practice and theory, a development shaped both by the disadvantages of its occurring in a small nation inundated by the influences of large nations as well as by its advantages: the overly large number of influences ultimately counterbalanced one another, and practice and theory were consequently liberated from a one-sided indebtedness. If, as the proverb says, a person generally has all the vices that accompany the virtues he is endowed with, the opposite is often true of Czechs: they know how to find the advantages that come with the disadvantages they suffer from.

But let us now turn to our subject proper. We have spoken about the complexity of the theatre, so we must first show what it consists in. We shall proceed from a familiar claim: since Richard Wagner's time it has been said that the theatre is in fact an entire collection of arts. This was the first formulation of the complexity of the theatre; it has the merit of primacy, but it does not capture the essence of the matter. For Wagner the theatre was the sum of several independent arts. Today, however, it is clear that, upon entering the theatre, the individual arts renounce their independence, intertwine with one another, contradict one another, substitute for one another – in brief "dissolve", merging into a new, fully unified art.

Let us look at music, for example. It is not present in the theatre only when it is directly heard, not even when – in opera – it actually takes possession of the stage word. The properties that music shares with theatrical activity (the intonation of the voice in relation to musical melody; the rhythm and agogics of movement, gesture, facial expression and voice) mean that every theatrical event can be projected against the background of music and formed on its model. The musician and director E. F. Burian has shown to what extent stage time can become rhythmically measurable according to the pattern of music even when there is no music on stage, and he has shown how the role of a linguistic intonational motif in the overall structure of a performance is closely related to the function of a melodic motif in a musical composition (Burian 1939). Not only musical drama has its melodic "leitmotifs"; spoken drama has them as well.

We encounter a similar situation with sculpture in the theatre. Sculpture is present on stage if a statue is part of the set. Even in such a case, however,

the function of the statue is different from what it is off stage. Off stage, for instance right in the lobby of a theatre, a statue is merely a thing, a depiction, whereas on stage it is a motionless actor, a contrast to a live actor. Proof of this may be found in the numerous theatrical themes in which a statue comes to life on stage.[3] As the opposite of an actor, a statue is constantly present on stage, even when its presence is not materialized: the immobility of a statue and the mobility of a live person form a constant antinomy between whose poles the actor's presence oscillates on stage. And when Gordon Craig put forth his famous demand for the "Übermarionette" actor, whose predecessors were, as he explicitly stated, the statues of gods in temples, he did nothing more than draw attention to this hidden but always present antinomy of the art of acting. What is usually called a "pose" is clearly a sculptural effect. In the medieval theatre "the movements are free and measured and they occur during the pauses in delivery, whereas the actor stands still during the delivery itself" (Golther 1926: 97). The sculptural mask of Classical times, of Japan and of other times and places also links the actor directly to a statue, and the transition between the immobility of a solid mask and the makeup of a modern actor is quite continuous, as is well known.

The other arts, whether literature, painting, architecture, dance or film, have a status in the theatre similar to that of music and sculpture. Each of them is always potentially present in the theatre, but at the same time each of them, when it comes into contact with the theatre, loses its intrinsic character and changes fundamentally. In addition, of course, there is another art that is inescapably bound to the theatre, namely acting, as well as an activity of an artistic nature that struggles to achieve the unity of all the components of theatre, namely directing. The presence of these two artistic components most distinctly characterizes the theatre as an independent and unified artistic form.

The complexity of the theatre is by no means exhausted by an enumeration of the arts that participate in the composition of a stage production. Each of these components breaks down into secondary components, which in turn are internally differentiated into other components. For example, the components of the actor's presence are: voice, facial expressions, gestures, movement, costume, and so on. Each of them is then complex in itself. For example the components of the voice are the articulation of speech sound elements, the pitch of the voice and its changes, its timbre, the intensity of exhalation and tempo. But we have still not come to the end. The individual vocal components can be broken down further. Take, for example, the timbre of the voice: every person has a particular vocal timbre forming part of his

3 [Editorial note (1978): For a more detailed discussion of this phenomenon see Jakobson 1975 [1937].]

physical personality. A speaker can be recognized by the timbre of his voice even if the listener does not see him. There are also, however, aspects of timbre that reflect various particular moods ("angrily", "joyfully", "ironically", and so forth) and whose meaning is independent of the personal timbre of the individual. Both these kinds of voice timbre can be exploited artistically. The individual vocal timbre of specific actors employed in a particular play can become a significant factor in the director's "instrumentation" of a stage performance. Temporary vocal timbre caused by a mental state is usually accounted for artistically either in the dramatic text itself (the author's stage directions, a wealth of emotional changes and oppositions in the dialogue) or in the actor's performance (cf. the rich range of vocal timbre that Tille, in *Memories of the Theatre*, ascribes to Eduard Vojan[4] in the latter's interpretation of the writer's neutral text).

So theatre has a rich scale of gradation. But can any one of its components be declared fundamental, absolutely necessary for the theatre? If we regard the theatre not from the standpoint of a certain artistic movement alone but as a constantly developing and changing phenomenon, the answer is "no". Individual developmental stages of the theatre and of particular theatrical movements have, of course, their prevailing components. The dominant component of the theatre at one time is the dramatic text, at another time the actor, at another time the director or even the stage set, and there are even more complicated cases – for example, theatre dominated by a director who nevertheless places the emphasis on the actor (Stanislavski 2008). The situation is similar in more detailed matters as well: sometimes components of facial expression, sometimes vocal components, and so on, prevail in the actor's performance (according to the period, the school, and so on). Even in the voice itself, sometimes articulation prevails, at other times intonation. All of this is extremely changeable, and all the components assume the leading role during the course of development without any of them attaining permanent dominance. And this changeability is made possible only because, as we have said, none of the components is absolutely necessary and fundamental for the theatre. A written text is not necessary, for there are theatrical forms in which the dialogue is largely improvised (for instance *commedia dell'arte* and some kinds of folk theatre) or even completely absent (mime). Even the actor himself, the vehicle of dramatic action, can be missing – at least temporarily – from the stage, his role assumed by another component, for example by light (in E. F. Burian's staging of *The Barber of Seville*,[5] through flickering

4 [Editor's note: Eduard Vojan (1853–1920), a leading Czech actor at the end of the nineteenth and beginning of the twentieth century and founder of the modern school of Czech acting.]

5 [Editor's note: E. F. Burian's adaptation of *The Barber of Seville*, which made topical allusions to the Spanish Civil War, premiered at the D 37 in 1936.]

and changes in colour the light connected with the howling of the storm expressed a popular uprising that was supposed to be taking place off stage; the stage itself was empty) or even by an empty, immovable stage, which precisely on account of its emptiness is able to express a decisive plot reversal (the Moscow Art Theatre, for example, favoured such "stage pauses"). Cases of this sort are, of course, rare, but they suffice to prove that the theatre is not inevitably bound to any of its components and that therefore its freedom to reconfigure is inexhaustible.

Nor are the individual components of the theatre bound by anticipated and unchangeable relations, as might often appear to be the case from the standpoint of rigid convention. There is no pair of components, no matter how closely related they may be, whose bond cannot be set into motion. It seems to us, for example, that gestures, facial expressions and speech are necessarily concurrent, but the Moscow Art Theatre has shown that their lack of concurrence can be artistically exploited in the theatre. Here is what Tille has to say about this in his comments on their production of *Uncle Vanya*:

> The Russian director drew on his experience that in life gestures, facial expressions and people's actions are not the logical result of the spoken word, just as words are not the result of external impulses, but that both spring – sometimes proportionately, sometimes disproportionately – from inner life, that both are caused by a hidden driving force that consists, on the one hand, in the characters of people in action, shaped through either their will or their unbridled energy, and, on the other hand, in those external influences that determine people's actions without their volition and often even without their awareness. (Tille 1917: 199)

Voice and gesture were therefore separated for the purpose of artistic effect. By breaking former convention and separating them, the Moscow Art Theatre influenced not only the further development of the theatre but also their audiences' life outside the theatre. After experiencing the Moscow Art Theatre's stage system, the spectator viewed himself and his fellow men with more discrimination; for him a gesture was no longer merely a passive companion of the voice but an independent symptom of a mental state, often more immediate than vocal expression. In all its many diverse variations the theatre always affects the spectator in the same direction: again and again, and from new aspects, it reveals to him the multifaceted correlation of the visible expressions of action.

An important requisite for the theory of theatre follows from this – to make the concept of the theatre as a set of non-material relations the method and goal of its study. In itself an enumeration of the components is a lifeless list. An (internal) history of the theatre proper is also nothing but a study of