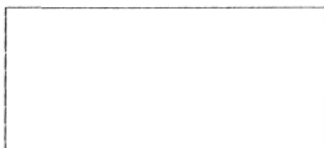


PRAISING THE PRIVACY



"When mankind matures, the art's faith is to become a kind of evening entertainment appreciated by small shopkeepers in Berlin, namely, a humorous piece staged in metropolitan theatres.

(Edward von Hartmann)

When observing our contemporary historic changes from the perspective of a city street, one can conclude that we are predominantly becoming the society of small shopkeepers and their customers. Should then one think that the changes are also affecting theatre arts which, according to Scholastics, occupied the seventh rung on the ladder of mechanistic arts, and which, consequently, is likely to turn into the Hartmannesque humorous piece, a burlesque spectacle of trivial messages satisfying the simple entertainment needs of their audiences when they are free of their business activities?

A theatre performance belongs to that type of artistic creativity that must be particularly responsive to average social demands. If it fails to satisfy those needs then, in effect, its presence is unjustified. Thus the initiators of artistic events must be able to respond easily and effectively to prevailing public interests at any given moment. They balance on the narrow *via media* between the high-brow and popular. Moreover, the public which follows the latter form of theatre production can often be capricious and easily bored by either too sophisticated or too low-brow alternatives. To win their hearts can mean to advocate noisy fashion and to intuitively feel the demands of "theatre market". Nonetheless, it may also constitute an attempt to establish a more intimate contact with the audiences. Effective in this respect is the ambiance of a small-audience performance. The basic idea here is to give up the staging of grand shows in favour of a "private event" with limited space, form, meaning, audience and funds.

Thomas Pietrasiewicz's theatre "N.N." has chosen this way of establishing contact and it consistently avoids wide publicity. Performances of their sole production up to date, namely, "Heavenly Wanderings", are rarely held, and the small audience often includes the actors' friends. On the stage, the three actors Renata Dziedzic, Grzegorz Linkowski and Jerzy Rarot (music performed by Witold Dabrowski) move along a narrow walkway which is walled on both sides by spectators and bound at the ends by closets and illuminated by a movable spot light. The light, together with music, plays a role of emotive reinforcement of the

stage action. The verbal element consist of a precisely constructed collage of texts, including excerpts from works by Hofmannsthal, Nabokov, Bulhakov, Borges, also Shakespearian *Hamlet* or Milosze's translation of Bomse's *My Mother's Prayer Before Dusk*. Following Jan Zielinski's accurate remark (in *ResPublica*, 1/91), the above set of quotes places viewers in an honourable company of authors and works published in "Zeszyty Literackie"; moreover, the quotes introduce a touch of aesthetics cultivated by the Parisian quarterly.

Worth noticing is the idea to transpose literary texts into a visual performance, together with the attempt to share the fascinating world of literature with the audience by means of symbolic images. However, what is the aesthetic impact upon the audience? What is left in the minds of viewers after leaving the theatre, besides the recognition of key images and the satisfaction of having participated in a cultural "morality play" of refined and sometimes even snobbish origin?

Above all there remains an impression of having participated in what Witkacy termed the "essential conversation". This conversation, having gone beyond the level of sense, allows one to see "the reflection of oneself and his world" (fragment of a quote from Nabokov". Obviously, this is the world of culture, which inevitably draws us into a moving space of literary works. It is also a world of literary associations, of imagination nourished by "visual means", of various fashions and attractive doctrines, of kaleidoscopic variability of value, and finally, of sensitivity saturated with an excess of the quality-varied supply presently in the market of ideas and ideologies.

---The proposition to privatise creativity and consumption - in other words to concentrate on several essential questions; to recall pieces of texts read long ago, fragmentary thoughts mislaid somewhere in memory which are so easy to lose in the crowd and tumult of everyday life; to look attentively at some details composed in a poetic image, at some evocative gestures accompanied by a recursive motif of a musical phrase, at a beam of light, at streams of artificial rain - all of this constitutes an invitation to participate in a process of intimate exchange of ideas in a kind of community, similar to a clan whose members have been revealed a secret, and who realise the value of a detail, and admit the need for reflection.

The problem of relationship between society and culture and the assimilation of its values and patterns, cannot remain altogether in the hands of public institutions and "cultural factories" which have been widely advertised and propagated. It cannot be directed by purely commercial motives, either. From the point of view of what can be labelled as "being rooted in culture", there exist undertakings of much greater importance which at the same time have a modest, if not provincial, scope. They are able to revive or create a separate tradition of "small

forms", to spawn circles of intimate interaction and to gather local communities. Less important is whether these are going to be humorous pieces or serious "poetic intervals". It is enough to think that now, in times of mature mankind, that is, a European free market period, these forms will appear capable of preserving the elements of an authentic relationship with culture and art by means of plunging deep into their roots. This is the wish for Lublin "N.N." theatre.

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