

Excerpts from my Masters Thesis on Artaud at
http://rgaffield.home.mindspring.com/antonin_artaud.htm:

Chapter 3 THEATRE OF CRUELTY

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By removing the playwright as the final authority of the collaborative process of theatre, Artaud has helped to reserve that place for many directors who followed him, including Jerzi Grotowski.

His most practical, if not most lasting, contribution to experimental theatre was his use of space suggested by "Theatre of Cruelty (First Manifesto)":

THE STAGE -- THE AUDITORIUM: We abolish the stage and the auditorium . . . so direct communication will be re-established between spectator and the spectacle, between the actor and the spectator, from the fact that the spectator, placed in the middle of the action, is engulfed and physically affected by it. This envelopment results, in part, from the very configuration of the room itself.

In effect, the absence of a stage in the usual sense of the work will provide for the deployment of the action in the four corners of the room.

For this diffusion of action over an immense space will oblige the lighting . . . to fall upon the public as much as upon the actors . . . the characters, swarming over each other like bees, will endure all the onslaughts of the situations . . . will (produce) the physical means of lighting, of producing thunder or wind, whose repercussions the spectator will undergo.

However, a central position will be reserved which, without serving, properly speaking, as a stage, will permit the bulk of the action to be concentrated and brought to a climax whenever necessary.

Of course, this reminds me of the scaffolding in the Kabuki theatre and also the present form of the Japanese stage, which became fixed probably in the early eighteenth century.

Chapter 5 Conclusion

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Grotowski, whose stage movement concepts and practices might be compared to Artaud's ideas and attempts at "Affective Athleticism" because of their emphasis upon gesture,

breath and emotional expression, has recognized Artaud's strong influence on the professional theatre artist. In his essay, "He Wasn't Entirely Himself," he writes that "we are entering into the age of Artaud." In the same essay he writes:

When an eminent creator with an achieved style and personality, like Peter Brook, turns to Artaud, it's not to hide his own weaknesses, or to ape the man. It just happens that at a given point of his development he finds himself in agreement with Artaud, feels the need of a confrontation, tests Artaud, and retains whatever stands up to this test. . . . And when . . . we discover that the essence of the theatre is found neither in the narration of an event, nor in the discussion of a hypothesis with an audience, nor in the representation of life as it appears from the outside, nor even in a vision--but that the theatre is an act carried out here and now in the actor's organisms, in front of other men; when we discover that theatrical reality is instantaneous, not an illustration of life but something linked to life only by analogy; when we realize all this, then we ask ourselves the question: wasn't Artaud talking about just this and nothing else?

. . . Like Isaiah, Artaud knew of Emmanuel's coming, and what it promised. He saw the image of it through a glass darkly.

Grotowski believed that Artaud was a visionary and prophet who envisioned the expanded dimensions of the actor's physical expression and agrees with Esslin that Artaud left no methodology to fulfill his prophecy.

According to Raymonde Temkine, one of his biographers, Grotowski claims he didn't know of the Théâtre Alfred Jarry or *The Theater and Its Double* before 1964. She writes he learned of Artaud's existence when a colleague of his at the Polish Laboratory Theater, Zygmunt Molik, referred him to an excerpt of Artaud's writing in *Dialog*, a Polish magazine. As for *The Theatre and Its Double*, Temkine writes that in 1964, "The book, which was being re-edited, had been impossible to find: I quickly sent him a copy." An interesting aside is that although he attended classes in Paris with Artaud's director, Charles Dullin, at least twice, Grotowski says he ". . . would rather be considered as indebted to his compatriot, S.I. Witkiewicz (pseudonym Witkacy) who developed theories close to Artaud, a generation before, and committed suicide in 1939." He also told Temkine that he "owed to Witkiewicz an idea that he considered essential: the theater can be a religion without religion." I wonder if he ever read Richard Wagner?

Antonin Artaud in Theory, Process and Praxis or, For Fun and Prophet
By Richard Gaffield-Knight