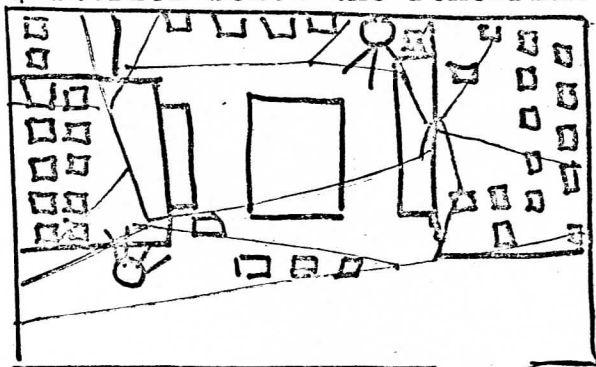


Monday March 24, 1969

Last night after the performance of APOCALYPSIS and just 24 hours after the marathon (23 straight hour) rehearsal Grotowski called for APOCALYPSIS, another notice was posted on the call board. On Monday from 11:00 a.m. until 3:00 p.m. a rehearsal for AKROPOLIS will be held. The "change-over" was done between the hours of nine Sunday night and four Monday morning. The platforms necessary for the set change over (and the lines which were strung in the room) were stored 4 stories below the rehearsal hall and had to be carried up.



Top view of AKROPOLIS set-up

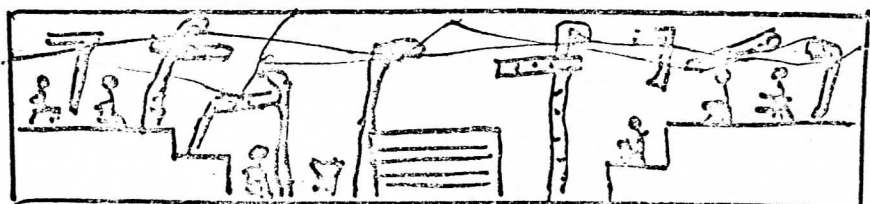
○ = 2 spots (only lights used)
 □ = chairs - nailed in position
 > = hemp lines

Rena Mirecka was to play for the first time in over a month and a half (since her breakdown). All actors filed into the rehearsal room , after we had already been seated dressed in their costumes which are bags full of holes covering naked flesh. The holes were lined with material suggesting torn flesh. Heavy wooden shoes for the feet. For the head, anonymous berets. The poetic version of the concentration camp uniform!



* Stove pipes and bath-tub

~ The room at the beginning of the performance.



~ The room at the conclusion of the performance.

Rehearsal= AKROPOLIS Monday, March 24th- 11:00 a.m.

Grotowski was seated on the highest platform to the left of us when we entered the rehearsal room. He looked immense. Pipe smoking, concentrated and seemingly penetrating you as he peered through his dark glasses. How he can see anything in this dim light is beyond me.

The actors filed in silently. Grotowski said "Let us begin." And the rehearsal, without interruption, was started. They ran through the play which lasted only fifty five minutes.

Ludwig Flaszens article about AKROPOLIS appears in the Tulane Drama Review T27 1965. My responses were as follows:

- I've seen it before in APOKALYPSIS
- I liked APOKALYPSIS better
- Terribly disappointed in this
- The movement is grotesque and suits some of the body work
- I am rapidly getting tired of gyrating bodies
- Molik cant carry the show as well as Cieslak
- Rena is grotesque- but I suppose does well
- I'm totally unmoved except for the last scene when they follow a corpse, carry it, singing a Christmas Carol- carry it like they are carrying the Redeemer..Their redemption is the gas oven...The burning of the flesh...
- You can tell they did this hundreds of times
- It seemed mechanical
- Well disciplined - and dead
- Confrontation! I wasn't confronted at all.

Grotowski gave us all a ten minute break at the end of the run through.

During the pick-ups that followed the break, the actors sat silently, attentively, listening to the pick-ups they must have heard before. It was all so disciplined- with just one or two comments which were made toward Cieslak by Stanley and Andziej.

Grotowski wanted to know was anything technical bothering the actors. Of course the one with the most points to correct was Cieslak:

- The lines were not hung properly (^{re-hung} will be)
- The stove pipe clamps were not all working well (corrected by Andziej while we all waited)
- A few body positions (when one actor carried another) were adjusted.
- All this was necessary for the actors had not played the play for three months.

Grotowski's comments now dealt with the following matters. (each comment was read from a 8 1/2 x 11 folded paper on which he made notes during the run through)

See next page.

Comments:

-When you sing the folk song, you sing it as if it were a contemporary song. Folk songs come from inside, from the body which is engaged- You all sang without using your bodies and imposed a "modern beat" to the songs.

- Zbigniew, when you rest in the wheelbarrow and try to kick Zygmund with you feet give us a variety of rhythms in the kicking.

-Zygmund, you are singing your wedding song with your head and neck only. Engage the body- the entire body. You sound as if you are listening to yourself. If you work with your body this wont occur.

- Rena, there is a little too much movement in the scene when you sit on Stanley in the bath-tub. It seems to me forced. You can overcome this by sensing his movement and relating to it.

- On the whole, I should say there was a striving for effects. DONT SEARCH FOR EFFECTS- LOOK FOR CAUSES. The search for "causes" will begin the forward movement and then just give yourself to it. follow it..Dont search for effects in anything- in the voice or in the body!

He made a few more comments of course, but the above sampling is a good example of his pick-ups. He makes specific comments on what is wrong and then gives a specific remedy.

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Performance of AKROPOLIS Monday March 24th 1969- 7:00 p.m.

What a difference with an audience present! It was a stimulating performance. All 50 of the seats were filled, so Franz, Francoise, John, Lee and I sat on two benches brought in and placed near the side walls. Grotowski and Flashen shared the place with us. After the performance (the actors remained in the box into which they all jumped at the plays end- they remained in the box until after the room had been cleared of the audience) we were told we had to help dis-assemble the platforms, carry them all three flights down to be stored- and store the stovepipes, wheelbarrows, lines and bath-tub. We worked, along with four stage hands hired for this task, until 10:15.

The play was moving in the procession which the Singer leads with the bluish and badly mauled corpse held high like a Savior. But on the whole the physical gyrations, though lessened in Akropolis compared to Apocalypsis, are distracting even though they are obviously stylized grotesque movements designed especially for this play. Perhaps I have seen too much of the "spastic" physical responses. Dont human beings ever speak without all that movement? Cant you be totally committed and your body enaged without it gyrating all over the stage? Grotowskis concept of the "engaged body" work well in AKROPOLIS where people are less than humans- reduced to being so. But in APOCALYPSIS this is seen too. Will all Grotowskis works remain in this narrow channel ? If so he will defeat his main purpose- to confront the audience- for the audience has difficulty in recognizing anything human. The spastic body communicates only the spastic condition

Critics on AKROPOLIS

Hobson: Desperate shrieking, deformed figures wander about the audience screaming and chanting.

Grotowski attempts to take beliefs and teachings of the past and cover them with ridicule.

The aim of Grotowski is to spurn Roman Catholicism as a whole- but in practice he is utterly dominated by its ritual, its chantings, its processions. His production seems less a powerful attack than an evidence of submission to what he seeks to ridicule!.....(One can write a book about this and Grotowski..This is Grotowskis personal perversion--he says he is not a believer but he protests too much. He seemingly dislikes the church but as Hobson says is wrapped up in it. All his examples are from the bible- in acting sessions. He dresses in black like a priest.. the actors are disciples- and Cieslak is Peter..Rena is Mary Magdeline...etc.....)

TV presentation comment:

There was not a moving, expressive face in the lot of them..Grotowskis actors circulate (around audience) perorate gesticulate all but wrap themselves around audie But all it amounted to was an hour of Polish cavortings.