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## **INTRODUCTION**

Jerzy Grotowski is a Polish theatre producer, director, teacher, author and of the most important and influential theatrical innovators and practitioner of the twentieth-century. He was the co-founder and Creative Director of the Polish Laboratory Theater and author of an influential and groundbreaking book *"Towards a Poor Theater"* (1968). Mr. Grotowski had a profound effect on the Art of acting and on the avant-garde theater movement.

Jerzy Grotowski proposes that dramatic performances are detailed investigations of the actor-audience relationship. Peter Brook states that: *"since Konstantin Stanislavsky, no one had investigated and experimented with the nature and meaning of acting as deeply and systematically as Jerzy Grotowski"*. He called the theatre space he opened in Opole, a *Laboratory*, because he saw it as a center of research but, unlike other centers of research, he argued that poverty is not a drawback and shortage of money is not an excuse for poor performance.

His experiments investigated the actor as the core of theatre art and he used the term *"Poor Theatre"* to explain his desire to explore and utilize basic dramatic elements that could enhance communication between actor and spectator. This paper examines the biography and oeuvre of Jerzy Grotowski, investigates the philosophies of his Art and highlights the major achievements in his career in midst of the Holocaust, Stalinism, the Iron Curtain and the Polish Solidarity movement.

## 1.0 **BIOGRAPHY AND CHRONOLOGY**

Jerzy Grotowski was born in Rzeszow, in southeastern Poland on 11<sup>th</sup> August 1933. His father, Marion, originally from the Kraków area, was a painter, sculptor and forest ranger while his mother, Emilia, was a school teacher. Until September 1939, the Grotowski family lived in Przemyśl. When World War II broke out and Poland was invaded by Hitler's German regime, his father enlisted in the Polish Army and was later stationed in England. Emilia Grotowski and her two sons moved to Nienadówka, a peasant village about twelve miles north of Rzeszów, where they spent the rest of the war in close proximity to their uncle who was a Catholic Bishop. After the war, his father moved to Paraguay and died there in 1968. From the age of six Grotowski never saw his father again.

In Nienadówka, Jerzy was enrolled in a grade school where his mother was hired as a teacher. During the final years of World War Two, Grotowski's mother gave him a present, the Polish edition of Paul Brunton's book on Hindu mystics - "*A Search in Secret India*". He discovered a variety of folk rites and beliefs and was most fascinated by the figure of Ramana Maharshi, a spiritual master whom his mother also admired. At the age of sixteen Grotowski fell seriously ill and was hospitalized for a period of time. He devoted himself to reading books and decided to dedicate his life to Art.

In 1950, Grotowski's family moved in Krakow where he finished his secondary education. The young Grotowski gained an interest in literature, performing and winning poetry recitals. In 1951, he graduated *summa cum laude* from the Fifth High School in Kraków and decided to become a Theatre director. He enrolled in the acting program of the State Theatre School in Kraków, gaining entrance on the strength of an essay on the question "*How can theatre*

*contribute to the development of Socialism in Poland?*”. Grotowski played the character Pyotr in Gorky's *“The Smug Citizen”* and he directed *“Love Scenes”*, a collage of excerpts from plays by Juliusz Slowacki. He graduated in June 1955 and by this time, had already published several articles like *“Red Balloon”* demonstrating an earnest commitment to the revitalization of the theatre in Poland whilst decrying the materialism that had pervaded Polish Theatre.

In August 1955, Grotowski received a scholarship to study directing at the State Institute of Theater Arts in Moscow. Under the supervision of Yuri Zavadsky, he directed *“The Mother”* by Jerzy Szaniawski at the Theater Institute but he was more passionate about the works of Konstantin Stanislavsky. It was there that he also studied acting techniques and artistic approaches by Russian theatre practitioners like Yevgeny Vakhtangov (fantastic realism), Vsevolod Meyerhold (biomechanics) and Alexander Tairov (Synthetic Theatre).

In the summer of 1955, Grotowski travelled to Central Asia on a fellowship grant where he was fascinated by Sanskrit and Oriental Philosophy. He returned to Poland in the autumn of 1956 and was accepted as a fifth-year student in the directing program at the Theatre School in Kraków, where he worked as an assistant professor. Grotowski's first professional production was at the Stry Theatre in Kraków, co-directed with Aleksandra Mianowska, *“The Chairs”* (1957) by Eugene Ionesco. During this time Jerzy Grotowski visited France and was captivated by the work of French Director Charles Dullin who proposed respect for the text, a simplified stage décor and favored a poetic rather than a spectacular perspective on the *mise-en-scène*, placing the actor at the center of the theatrical performance.

In 1958 he directed a workshop production of Prospero Mérimée's *"The Devil Made a Woman"* as well as a production called *"Gods of Rain"*, a contemporary play by Jerzy Krzysztoń, at the Kameralny Theatre in Kraków. He also visited Paris again where he met the famous pantomime artist Marcel Marceau and was very impressed by the mime's work. He wrote an essay on Marceau and argues:

*"Modern man, placed by science in a cosmos without heaven, gods, and demons . . . can find some hope, psychologically rooted in the unity and immortality of nature."*

During this time (1959) he published several articles. In *"Theatre and the Cosmic Man"*, he discusses *"the simultaneous death and triumph"* of the theater. He concludes that theater can survive only as art born of immediacy. In *"Death and Reincarnation of the Theatre"*, Grotowski talks about the death of theater in its present form. The *mise en scène*, he argues *"may consciously lead to direct contact between"* actor and spectator. In *"Good or Bad"*, Grotowski examines the weakness of Polish Theater schools, in particular, their alienation from their specific audience, artistic incompetence and the uneven quality existing among students. He recommended an institution of research and developmental programs in theater schools to carry on research into applied aesthetics, trends, methods, theories, styles, formal developments in theaters of past and present, applied psychology and psychodynamics and audience psychology.

In March of 1959, Grotowski directed his final production at the Old Theater in Kraków, Anton Chekhov's *"Uncle Vanya"*, before moving to Opole for a job offer after a short stint in political activism (October Polish). By June of 1959, the new *Theatre of 13 Rows* in Opole was established with Ludwik Flazen as its Literary Director and Jerzy Grotowski, aged 25, as its

Creative Director. It was later renamed *Laboratory Theatre*. It consisted of a permanent troupe of nine actors who took part in in-depth explorations of dramatic possibilities as well as performances. It was the findings and dramaturgy of the Laboratory's research which shook the theatre world in the 1960s marking Jerzy Grotowski as one of the most enigmatic, creative and philosophical theatre practitioner of the twentieth-century.



Fig 1: Jerzy Grotowski

The *Laboratory Theatre* troupe went on to produce and tour Katowice, Kraków and Warsaw with productions like: Jean Cocteau's "*Orpheus*" (October 8<sup>th</sup> 1958), Lord Byron's "*Cain*" (January 30<sup>th</sup> 1960), Vladimir Mayakovsky's "*Mystery Bouffe*" with architect Jerzy Gurawski as Set designer (July 31<sup>st</sup> 1960), Kalidasa's poem "*Sakuntala*" (December 13<sup>th</sup> 1960), Johann Wolfgang von Goethe's "*Faust*" (April 13<sup>th</sup> 1960 at Polish Theatre at Poznan), "*Dziady (Forefathers' Eve)*" by Adam Mickiewicz (June 1961), *Kordian*, by Juliusz Słowacki (February 13, 1962), "*Akropolis*" based on Stanisław Wyspiański's play of 1904, designed by Józef Szajna (a holocaust survivor) and with Eugenio Barba as Assistant Director (October 10<sup>th</sup> 1962),

Christopher Marlowe's "*The Tragical History of Dr. Faustus*" (1963) and Stanisław Wyspiański's version of Shakespeare's "*Hamlet Study*" (1964).

In 1965 the *Laboratory Theatre* moved from Opole to a more urban university town called Wrocław to conduct experiments in their avant-garde style of "*Poor Theatre*". Their work together soon exploded onto the World stage with Stanisław Wyspiański's "*Akropolis*" and Juliusz Słowacki's reworking of Pedro Calderón de la Barca's drama "*The Constant Prince*" (April 1965). Between 1965 and 1966, Grotowski toured the world exhibiting his techniques in cities like Paris, Milan, Rome, Padua, Amsterdam, London (invited by Peter Brook) and New York. In September 1966 the "*Laboratory Theatre*" changed its name to "*The Laboratory Theatre Research Institute of Acting Method*". The *Laboratory* was gaining fame with foreign students as they rehearsed for three years for the critical acclaimed production "*Apocalypse cum figuris*" (February 1969) directed Jerzy Grotowski.

Following the 1967 Arab-Israel war Anti-Semitism grew to new heights not seen since the Fall of Hitler's Third Reich. This was furthered fueled by Poland's decision to support the Soviet Union to invade Czechoslovakia. During 1968 to 1969, Grotowski travelled to India, Belgrade, Mexico, Scotland, France and to U.S.A where the *Laboratory* performed at Greenwich Village and the Brooklyn Academy of Music. In 1968, his seminal book "*Towards a Poor Theatre*" was published and edited by his student Eugenio Barba.

During the 1970's at the peak of his professional acclaim, Jerzy Grotowski decided to leave Theatre and travel the world seeking knowledge. He read the works of Jack Kerouac, John C.



Lilly and Arnold Mindell. He listened to Bob Dylan's music. He then travelled Far East to India to visit the shrine of Ramakrishna and met spiritual leaders like Mother of Pondicherry and a Baul Master. He then travelled to Colombia to reshape his views on Theatre. Grotowski experimented with a concept called "*Paratheatre*" which seeks to extend the privilege of creative performance to those not usually involved with Theatre productions. These workshops included "*Beehives*", "*Tree of People*", "*Holiday*" and "*Night Vigil*" which were conducted in wild forests, abandoned castles and farms. There were no spectators; all "acted" with the *Laboratory* actors as guides. Many participants described the difficulty of re-entering daily life after such emotional and physical exploration.

During 1973, Grotowski travelled to U.S.A, New Zealand, Canada, Australia and Japan. While in Japan he met Tadashi Suzuki who introduced him to "*Noh Theatre*" and the *Suzuki* method of actor training. In 1975, the Laboratory sponsored an event called "*The University of Research of the Theatre of Nations*" held in Wroclaw attended by over four thousand people including Peter Brook, Luca Ronconi and Andre Gregory.

In 1976, the Laboratory ceased stage productions and embarked on a series of workshops in France and Poland. By 1978, the Laboratory changed focus from *Paratheatre* and Grotowski engaged in a new project called "*Theatre of Sources*". Grotowski and his team conducted his research in isolation at Brzezinka. They travelled to Haiti, Nigeria, Mexico and India to study the performative elements in ritual ceremonies. "*Theatre of Sources*" dealt with existential themes.

By 1980 two important events occurred, Karol Wotyła, a Polish cardinal was elected Pope and Lech Wałęsa a shipyard worker started the Solidarity Movement to protest workers' rights. However, in 1981 General Jaruzelski came to power and imposed martial law in Poland. Fearful of authorities Grotowski fled to Denmark, Italy, Haiti and eventually seeking political asylum in the U.S.A in 1982. By 1984, The Polish Laboratory Theatre was disbanded.

Jerzy Grotowski proceeded to teach at Columbia University in New York before accepting an offer to teach at University of California- Irvine. At Irvine he received a grant to start a three year project called "*Focused Research Program in Objective Drama*". It was during this time that he met his protégé Thomas Richards. "*Objective drama*" was an investigation on the psychological impact of various performative tools like rituals and folklore.

Grotowski insisted that he was not returning to stage production but teaching his style of stagecraft. However, after disagreeing with his American benefactors, Grotowski and his protégés emigrated to Italy at the invitation of Roberto Bacci and Carla Pollastrelli setting up base in Tuscany. Grotowski entered his final phase of research called "*Art as vehicle*" or "*Ritual Arts*". Grotowski proposes that Art is a vehicle for imparting meaning and understanding.

In the 1990's, Jerzy Grotowski travelled to Poland, Brazil and U.S.A receiving the MacArthur "Genius" Award in 1991. In 1997 Grotowski was appointed as the first Chair of Theatre Anthropology at the prestigious Collège de France. In January 14, 1999 Grotowski died in Pontedera, Italy after a prolonged battle with leukemia at the age of 65.

## **2.0 THE PHILOSOPHY OF JERZY GROTOWSKI**

Jerzy Grotowski is a complex enigma whose command of stagecraft and dramaturgy can be compared in the rank of genius. He was initially a shadowy figure who wore black suits with dark sunglasses. He was a chain smoker and studied Theatre with a passion and zeal to discover knowledge and truth. His dynamic personality is hard to analyze because he had no set rigid formula to his craftsmanship. Like the Christ figure in Nazareth he was initially rejected by his homeland but adored and revered by international critics and artists.

### **2.1 EARLY INFLUENCES ON GROTOWSKI'S LIFE**

Jerzy Grotowski grew up in a Catholic background in a small peasant village in Southeastern Poland. At six years old, Jerzy Grotowski's father abandoned the family at the onset of the Second World War when Germany invaded and annexed Poland. Jerzy's family was hidden by a peasant family in a small town Nienadówka. As a teen he experienced the horrors of the Auschwitz death concentration camp. After the war, Poland was controlled by the repressive Stalin government which imposed artistic censorship during the Iron Curtain era. Grotowski was inspired by the literary Polish Romanticism movement delving in the works of Adam Mickiewicz, Juliusz Słowacki and Stanisław Wyspiański. His mother was also instrumental in introducing him to Oriental theology.

During the early 1930s, the French dramatist and actor Antonin Artaud put forth a theory for a Surrealist theatre called the Theatre of Cruelty. Based on ritual and fantasy, this form of theatre

launched an attack on the spectators' subconscious in an attempt to release deep-rooted fears and anxieties that are normally suppressed, forcing people to view themselves and their natures without the shield of civilization. Grotowski however denied using Artaud's philosophy in his initial experiments towards "*Poor Theatre*".

While in Russia, Grotowski was influenced by Konstantin Stanislavsky acting technique who subjected his acting and direction to a rigorous process of artistic self-analysis and reflection. He studied Charles Dullin's rhythm exercises, François Delsarte's investigations of extroverted and introverted reactions, Meyerhold's bio-mechanical training, Vakhtangov's synthesis, Brecht's *Epic Theatre*, training techniques of the Peking Opera, Indian Kathakali dance and Japanese Noh theatre.

Grotowski emphasized, however, that he and his company were not merely accruing techniques but were using physical and mental exercises to free the actor from blocks, eliminating obstacles between the inner impulse and the outer reactions. Grotowski was well versed with the works of Friedrich Nietzsche and Carl Jung.

## **2.2 TENETS OF POOR THEATRE**

During 1959 to 1970, Grotowski and his team developed a new unique technique in dramaturgy. He called it "*Poor Theatre*". He concludes that make-up, costume, scenography, stage-lighting, sound effects, music (except for the sounds coming from the actors themselves) and even written texts are supplementary. All that is essential is "*the actor-spectator relationship of perceptual, direct, live communion*". He rejects "Synthetic theatre" made up of the various disciplines of the arts - literature, sculpture, painting, architecture and music. "*The Rich Theatre*" as he calls it,

*“depends on artistic kleptomania, drawing from other disciplines, constructing hybrid spectacles...”* Furthermore, Grotowski argued that Theatre should never try to be or compete with Film. *“Poor Theatre”* strips away all of Theatre’s excesses.

Grotowski’s rigorous training workshops and rehearsals attempted to help the actor to remove all psychological and physical blockages that prevented them from making a *“total gift”* of oneself during a performance. Grotowski contrasted between two types of actors: a Courtesan and a holy actor. A Courtesan actor exploits their Art for fame and money while the Holy actor undertakes an act of self-penetration, who reveals himself and sacrifices the innermost part of himself - the most painful, that which is not intended for the eyes of the world”.

Some of the attributes of Poor Theatre productions include:

- a.) Scripts - Grotowski adapted many Polish Romantic books, Gnostic Gospel of St. Thomas as well as passion plays adding his own flair and ingenuity.
- b.) Movement and Gesture - Grotowski taught an intense physical choreography and mime. He emphasized that movement was key in dramatic performance. If masks are used they are composed by the actor by their facial gesture.
- c.) Stagecraft – Grotowski aimed to eliminate the division between actor and an audience. Actors and Audience were placed around each other to next to each other. The Actors and Spectator are integrated in the dramatic space and action. Grotowski’s stages were usually bare with few props. When props are used they are symbolic and transform during the play’s narrative. Costumes were used not to identify character but to depict

anonymity. Lighting was a simple setup usually light cast on the main character and sometimes on the audience.

d.) Music – Grotowski minimized the use of music relying on diegetic compositions performed by the actor.

e.) Make-Up – Grotowski encouraged the actor to try to transform himself without the help of makeup. If makeup was used only after all the other possible changes of character had been explored, then its use, Grotowski believed, would be much more expressive.

## **2.3 METAPHYSICAL AND THEATRE**

A close study of Jerzy Grotowski's work reveals he was a proponent of the Existentialism movement. Although he was raised in a Catholic home he travelled widely and studied Far East Theology and Philosophy including Hinduism, Laoism, Taoism and Buddhism. He also worked with a Haitian voodoo priest- Amon Fremon. Grotowski argued that the theatrical stage is a sacred place. Hence dramatic performance was a ritual.

Grotowski proposes that "Art cannot be bound by the laws of common morality or any catechism". To him the function of Art was to question the status quo and raise consciousness by making Art that has a didactic function in society. Jerzy Grotowski was well versed with the *Nag Hammadi* Gnostic scriptures concentrating on the Gospel of Thomas. Grotowski rejected the clichéd terminology of entertaining "*shows*" and repositioned theatre as an encounter between spectator and actor. The actor had to deliver a "total act" by engaging directly with the audience.

Grotowski avoids the word “spiritual” and instead speaks of energy: *“it is something that doesn’t belong to any church, to any sect, to any ideology. It is a phenomenon with which everyone can experiment”*. He states that *“God created theatre for those for whom the church does not suffice...Theatre can be a religion without religion”*. In 1976, during a sermon at an open-air service in Skalka, Kraków, Cardinal Stefan Wyszyński, admonished Grotowski called his *“Apocalypsis cum figuris true muck”* which was demoralizing the Polish nation as badly as alcoholism and threatened to excommunicate him. He was also labelled by critics and Right-Wing as a blasphemer, atheist and charlatan.

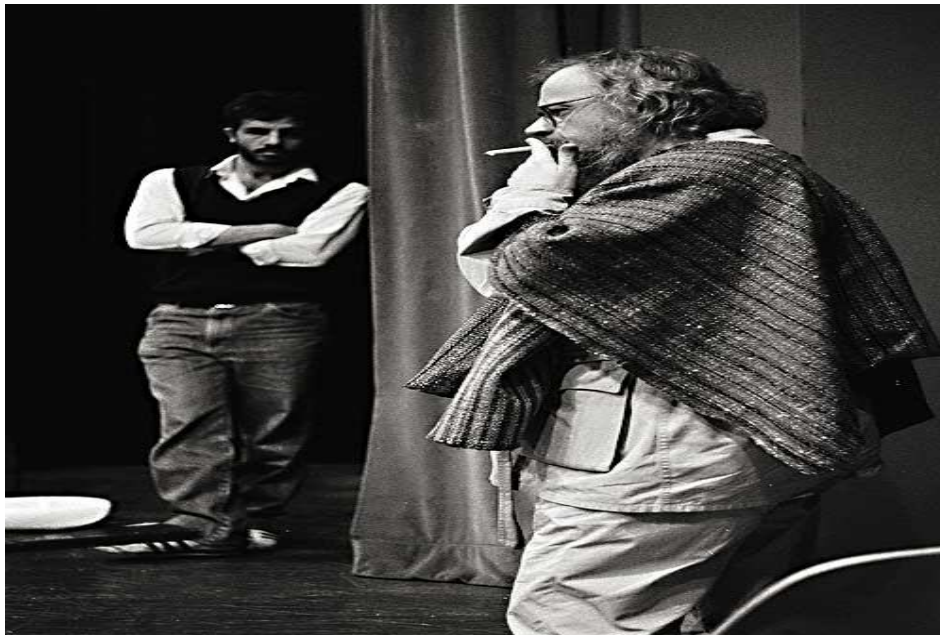


Fig 2: Jerzy Grotowski

### **3.0 THE LEGACY OF JERZY GROTOWSKI**

Jerzy Grotowski left an indelible mark in modern theatre. Like Konstantin, he focused on an intense training and understanding on the role of the actor in dramatic performance. He experimented in his stagecraft for more than twenty-five years producing numerous plays in the avant-garde tradition. He broke the conventions of traditional theatre but stripping it of excesses and proposing a communion between actor and spectator. He coined this phenomenon as "*Poor Theatre*".

Grotowski had a cult following from Sweden, Finland, Netherlands, U.S.A, Australia and Canada who admired his work mantra and philosophy including Peter Brook who wrote a preface in Jerzy's seminal book "*Towards a Poor Theatre*"(1968). He also inspired American director Joseph Chaikin's "*Open Theatre*" workshops.

Grotowski mentored Eugenio Barba, of Odin Theater in Denmark, to formulate his own the ideological position known as "*Third theatre*". His book "*The Floating Islands*"(1979) examines a Theatre existing independently that creates from whatever material resources are at hand.

The Grotowski Institute in Poland is devoted to documentation and research of the artistic activities of Grotowski and the Laboratory Theatre, as well as organizing international meetings, conferences and theatre workshops. Jerzy Grotowski left his intellectual property to his close confidant and protégé Thomas Richards.



Jerzy Grotowski received numerous awards and distinctions including:

- 1972 - State Award 1st class in the realm of Art for “creative activities with the Laboratory Theatre on staging and research into the art of acting”: Diploma of Merit from the National Museum of the USA “for exceptional contributions to the development of world theatre”.
- 1973 - Creation of the American Institution for Research and Studies into the Oeuvre of Jerzy Grotowski: Honorary Doctorate of the University of Pittsburgh.
- 1975 - Winner of a Wrocław City Prize for “his creative activities in the realm of theatre”.
- 1985 - Honorary Doctorate of the University of Chicago.
- 1991 - Honorary Doctorate of the University of Wrocław.
- 1997 - Professor of the College de France.



Fig 3: Collage of Jerzy Grotowski

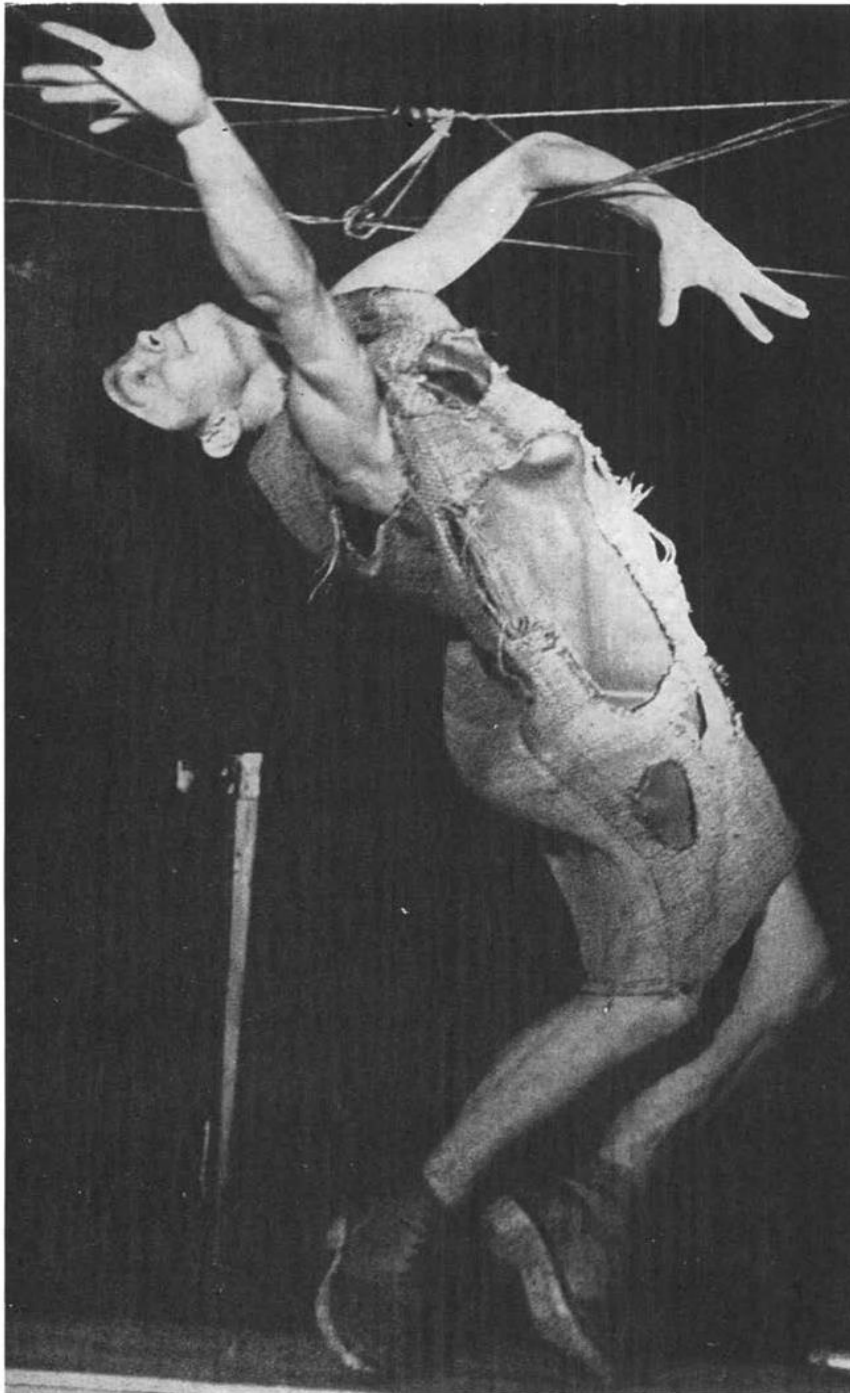
## **4.0 SELECTED WORKS OF JERZY GRODOSKI**

### **4.1 ACROPOLIS**

A production based on Stanisław Wyspiański's dramatic epic poem, was first presented at the *Laboratory Theatre of 13 Rows* on 10 October 1962. Jerzy Grotowski and Józef Szajna helped in the set design, costumes and props. This complicated 4-act drama is based on a Polish tradition juxtaposed with a setting from *Auschwitz* death camps holds that on the night of the Resurrection, characters depicted in the works of art in the Wawel Cathedral in Krakow come to life, reliving their adventures. In the first act, four silver angels who hold the coffin of St. Stanislas, the patron saint of Poland, come to life and proceed to "*wake up*" other sculptures that line the walls of the Cathedral, who begin to act as normal people with their joys, sorrows and conflicts.

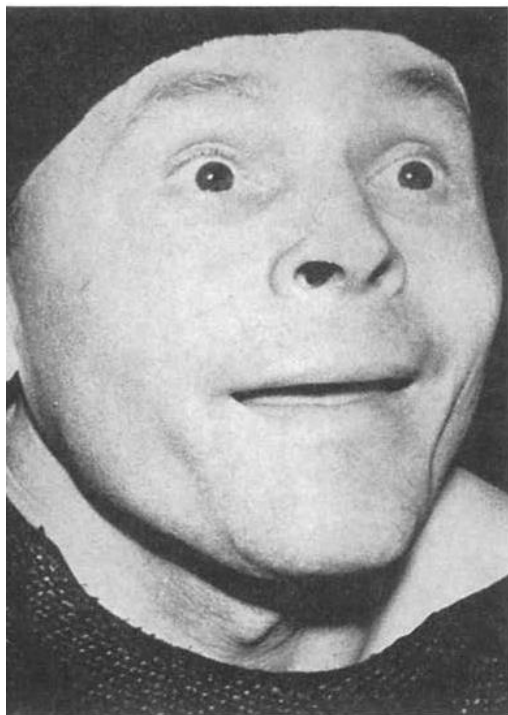
In the Second Act, scenes from the siege of Troy that are enacted outside the Cathedral. In the 3rd act, characters from eight Flemish Baroque tapestries become flesh and relive the Old Testament story of Jacob. Finally, a statue of David comes to life, tells his own story, and expresses a fervent desire for the Resurrection. In the fourth Act, the statue of Jesus becomes animated and responds "I am here!" whereupon Apollo comes driving into the Cathedral in a golden chariot with four white horses. The Apollo and Jesus figures fuse into one symbolic entity and "the walls and vaults of the Cathedral catch fire and begin to crumble while, simultaneously, spring dawns and a new light rises over the stage.

## 4.2 SCENES FROM ACROPOLIS



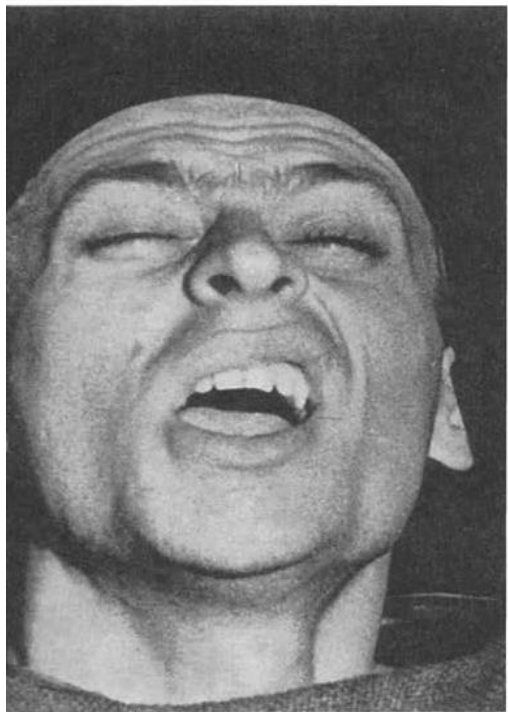
2. Akropolis: Esau (Ryszard Cieslak) sings the praises of the freedom of a hunter's life.  
Photo: Teatr-Laboratorium.

Fig 4: Biomechanics of Poor Theatre



9. Akropolis: Masks created solely by the facial muscles (Zygmunt Molik, Zbigniew Cynkutis, Rena Mirecka). Photo: Teatr-Laboratorium. 10.

11.



12.

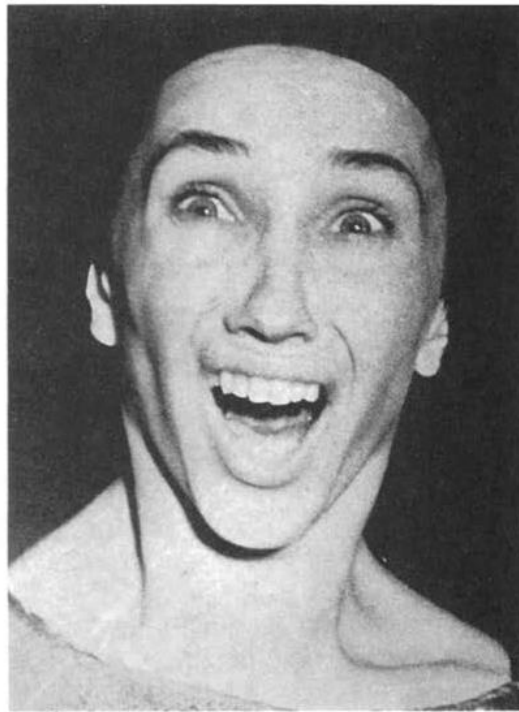
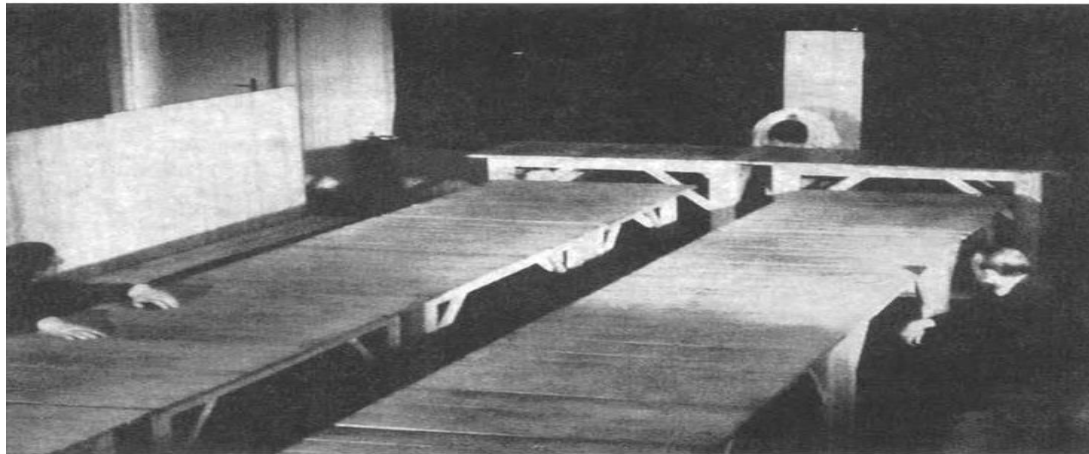


Fig 5: Facial Gestures and Masks in Poor Theatre

### 4.3 DR. FAUSTUS

This was a production performance based on Christopher Marlowe's drama (c. 1589), which premiered on 23 April 1963 at the Laboratory Theatre of 13 Rows in Opole directed by Jerzy Grotowski with an eccentric Stage design by Jerzy Gurawski. The play's plotline depicts the conflict surrounding Dr. Faustus who has made a pact with the devil in search for truth over beauty.

#### 4.3.1 STAGE DESIGN FOR DR. FAUSTUS



15. **Dr Faustus:** General view of the scenic arrangement. Faustus (Zbigniew Cynkutis) awaits the arrival of his guests (the spectators). Photo: Opiola-Moskwiak.  
16. **Dr Faustus:** The double androgynous Mephistopheles (Rena Mirecka and Antoni Jaholkowski). Photo: Opiola-Moskwiak.

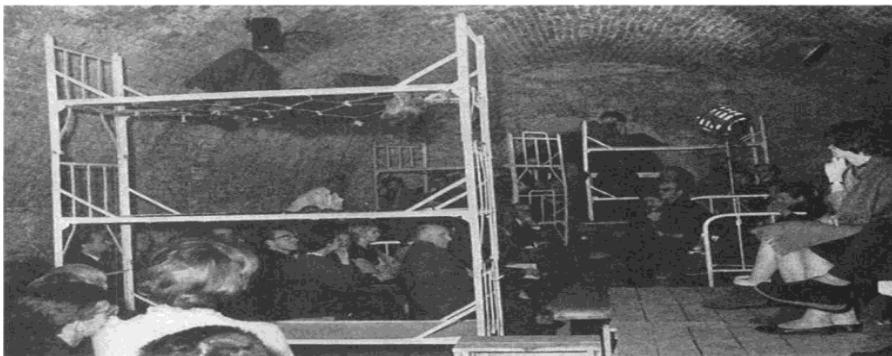


FIG 6: Set design for Dr. Faustus

#### 4.4 KORDIAN

This production based on Juliusz Słowacki's drama, with a script and direction by Jerzy Grotowski was first performed publicly at *The Theatre of 13 Rows* on 14 February 1962. The fundamental concept of the staging and dramaturgical reworking of the text involved situating Kordian's entire history within one stage – a mental institution. The whole theatre space was filled with beds, most of them bunk-beds. Audience members sat on them or next to them and were thus forced into very close contact with the actors while observing the action taking place in between the beds.

##### 4.4.1 SCENE FROM KORDIAN



95.

95-96. **Kordian**. Scenic arrangement. The action takes place in a mental hospital, the spectators being treated as patients. Kordian's actions (*Z. Cynkutis*) are considered as symptoms of his madness. While believing himself to be on the top of Mont Blanc (photo 96), solemnly offering his blood for his country, in reality he is being bled and thus cured of his sick dreams (*Z. Cynkutis, Z. Molik, A. Jahołkowski*). Photo: *Węglowski*.

96.

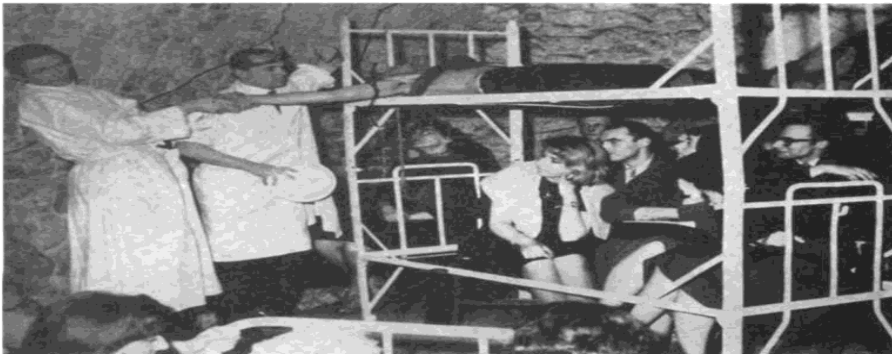


FIG 7: Set design for Kordia with bunk beds

## 5.0 CRITIQUE TO GROTOSKI'S WORK

Jerzy Grotowski's work is hard to analyze because of the complexity of his personality and philosophy. As a theatre student, I am fascinated by his unconventional methods in physical acting techniques, respiratory exercises, adherence to theatrical discipline and integrity. I am also attracted to his experiment in breaking the "*fourth wall*" by creating a communion between actor and spectator.

In his philosophical theories and experiments in Theatre, I admire his view on stripping the excesses of traditional drama by eliminating elements of *mise-en-scène* like costume, make-up, props and scenography. He visions the stage as a Character, a sacred point between actor and spectator. His obsession to study Haiti and Nigerian ritual dramatic performance is an indication that he appreciated traditional African Theatre.

Although critics have admonished Grotowski's work as being anti-Art, boring and too confrontational in actor-audience encounter, after careful analysis of his *oeuvre* from his time in Russia, to his monumental work at the Theatre Laboratory, I can boldly assess his work to be that of a genius. Grotowski transcended Art because he examined the core language of dramatic performance. To him Art was a sacred vehicle that is able to let humanity examine and correct the past, present and future. Grotowski plays depicted themes concerning the horrors of the Holocaust and controversial questions relating to Religious doctrine and dogma.

## CONCLUSION

Jerzy Grotowski is a complex enigma whose command of stagecraft and dramaturgy can be compared in the rank of genius. Growing from a humble beginning in Southeast Poland, Jerzy grew up against a backdrop of the Holocaust, Stalinism and the Great Depression. His family was deeply spiritual. Grotowski's work often depicts Hellenistic and Christian narratives in adapted literature from the Polish Romanticism movement.

Jerzy Grotowski dedicated his life to studying Theatre and Theology. He studied great Artists like Stanislavski, Meyerhold, Brecht and Dullin and studied Peking Opera. Grotowski travelled widely around the world studying ritual performance of indigenous communities in Haiti and Nigeria. He developed the concept called "*Poor Theatre*" which strips the excesses of Traditional Theatre. He argued that costume, make-up, lighting, music, sound effects and set design could be eliminated and instead embellished the encounter between actor and spectator.

Jerzy Grotowski produced his masterpieces when he was appointed Creative Director at *Theatre of 13 Rows* in Opole and Wroclaw. Such productions include "*Dr. Faustus*", "*Akropolis*", "*Constant Prince*" and "*Apocalypsis cum figuris*". In 1968, his concepts on "*Poor Theatre*" were published in a book "*Towards a Poor Theatre*". Grotowski continued experimenting in acting techniques during the oppressive era of the Iron Curtain. When martial law was imposed in 1981, Grotowski fled and sought asylum in U.S.A where he eventually lectured at the University of California- Irvine. He retired with his protégé Thomas Richards and team to Tuscany, Italy where he continued experimenting in ritual performance. Jerzy received many awards and distinctions like the MacArthur "Genius" Award in 1991.



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