

Getting Drunk With Grotowski on Good Friday:

Yesterday, before the APOCALYPSIS performance I was informed by both Pani Stefa and Mr. Cell that Grotowski wanted to see me at the Klub at 4 p.m. on Good Friday! I had apprehensions about meeting him. Would he ask me to leave immediately because I told him May 1st was my last day? Would he assign me some insignificant task during the time he was away, ruining my chances of going to East Berlin to see the Berliner Ensemble... All the worries were groundless. He was an hour late because of a previous appointment, but the wait was worthwhile.

We went to the Klub and he asked me what I wanted to drink. "Tea," I said.. counting my few zloty. He proposed some cognac and we ordered two of them for each of us plus tea. He returned to the table and said "This will be our last conference since I won't be able to see you before I leave for France. My time is your time.".....

It was a wonderful discussion unburdened by formality. The following points were made.

Text
is
NOT
PRETEXT

"I never said the text is a pretext. It is a trampoline! That is the text is like a crystal radio. It offers a narrow beam. This beam attracts the actor and the actor plays within this beam. Thus the actor and the beam (which is the text) unite."

TRAINING
Youth
for
Theatre

"I have spent more time, and know the Orient better than I know Europe. I noticed that families have traditions in the theatre. A son would follow his fathers footsteps as an actor. He perhaps had no great talent as an actor, but his youth and his work during his youth prepared him well to carry on work as an actor later in his life. From 8 yrs on an actor should begin training. Then when he reaches 18 he can continue with 10 years training behind him... Some say that this is too early a time to decide on a vocation. Is it any better than at 18? I am of the opinion that we fall into the theatre by accident and not design. In the case of the Oriental actor who follows his fathers footsteps it is by design. But most often it is an accident. It was in my case. If at 18 he should decide to change professions, fine. But if he continues he has ten years training behind him. The training should certainly include physical work, some of which we do now, but I am not sure what other kind of work it should entail. That would have to be worked out- studied- experimented. I do know what should NOT be done. Illustration of dramatic literature which is generally done in high schools!

(this was an answer to a question about young peoples training I proposed to him--I told him of the Interlochen Arts Academy, its plan and its utter lack of direction in the field of the theatre.)

Directing!!
2 PHASES

"As a director you work in two phases. The first phase opens you entirely in the direction of the actor. That is you feel like him. You don't push him to pursue his own line, but you watch him to find HIS line.. the second phase is when you as a director behave like the spectator. In the first phase you use the terms "I don't believe you..."

Methods
of
Guiding
Actors

- " I do believe you.....In the second phase you use the terms " I dont understand you... This is very important!
- " Never give an actor your direction. It is alright to tell him your action is " to help, to scold etc.....But you can only do that when you see something in him first. You must feel with the actor...You said Mr. Slowik that you think Elizabeth plays spastically. Then you would work on her to increase the spastic condition (which is subconscious in her) and then slowly, by watching her, guide her toward another path. You also say Andziej plays with his own body. Make him do it consciously..then guide him away from it later. "
- " You ask why my plays are not full of joy. If they were it would mean I see life without faith or joy. For the joy in the play would be a perversion of the agony of life..."
- " Vahktangov, when he knew he was dying of cancer, did his great production of TURANDOT joyously. It was his perversion of his mortal malady."
- "Antoni does have a comic and tragic sense as you indicated. He plays APOCALYPSIS with only 25 % of what he really has in him. You will note after my 23 hour rehearsal the actors played with less strain and forcefulness. The last two performances were forced. I shall have to rehearse them again."

ESSENES

- " Yes, Mr. Slowik Christ could have been an Essene. But the Essenes were like " beats"..there was a gradation of them. The time was ripe for a Messiah. Others have gone the way of the cross, but the thing that binds me to Christ is that he was human- with the frailty of Adam."

(Yes, I see that in APOCALYPSIS)

- " You ask about carrying Peter on the shoulders by the Christ figure. That just came out because I thought we needed a lift there..Yes it COULD mean the rescue of the church by Christ, although the group of people look upon the "dark one" in the play as an idiot...An idiot with the naivete of a child."

John XIII

- " Pope Pius XII and Pope Paul wer conscious of their faith. Pope John XXIII was like a child. I am very fond of him."

" I believe Christ did live. Because of his weaknessess."

Advice

- " You reached something in your work with your voice. Seek that same truth in others. Help them find it. Dont impose yours on them! "

After the two cogniac (which Grotowski paid for) I was in seventh heaven. So cordial, so warm---he even touched me at one time with tenderness....How my thoughts about him change. One time I think of him as a charleton- another time as an authentic genius.

...Good Friday Koniec...

" No, I dont want immortality. I dont seek it."

A Perverse Dream :

Last night I dreamt Grotowski came into my house wearing gaudy bright colors and a chekerboard tam.

"I wish to bring APOCALYPSIS on the American tour. But the fire laws may prevent me. A woman will be coming here sometimes next week to see APOCALYPSIS. If it cannot be accepted with the use of candles, I cannot and will not present it."

"Stanilawski is best to use for realistic plays done in a realistic way."

"The theatre is hard work. People think it is fun and glamour. We know it is hard and trying work. Can anyone consciously choose it. No, we fall into it accidentally."

"Only three times in my career did I fail to get a personal response from the actors I was working with. If you watch them closely, if you guide them to find their own associations, it is bound to work."

"Rehearsal is rehearsal whether it is a six month or three week period. The approach to find the confrontation, the self revelation is the same in each instance."

End of Interview

Good Friday

April 4 1969