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Kazimierz Braun: A progress toward a theatre of the community

Schlatter, James Francis, Ph.D.

City University of New York, 1992

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KAZIMIERZ BRAUN:

A PROGRESS TOWARD A THEATRE OF THE COMMUNITY

by

James F. Schlatter

A dissertation submitted to the Graduate Faculty in Theatre in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy The City University of New York.

1992

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by

James F. Schlatter

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This manuscript has been read and accepted by the Graduate Faculty in Theatre in satisfaction of the dissertation requirement for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

April 30, 1992
Date

Daniel Gerould
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This study represents the fulfillment of a long-time dream: to enter as completely as possible into the life of an immensely rich and complex culture and its theatre, and record a small part of that life with some objectivity, sensitivity, and insight. If I have succeeded in any measure in achieving this dream I owe many people an enormous debt of gratitude.

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for their wisdom and patience as they helped me prepare this study.

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INTRODUCTION

> Directing is an art and an act of creating life. And preserving life. . . . Providing circumstances for life to be born, to be discovered, to be.[1]
>
> Kazimierz Braun

In order to make a fair assessment of the life's work of a theatre director, one must be willing to accept the formidable responsibility of bringing some measure of judgment not only on the work, but on the life that he or she has created in the theatre. As the above quotation testifies, this responsibility is especially daunting if one undertakes to assess the long and prolific career of Kazimierz Braun. The act of making theatre is for Braun a profound encounter with the struggles and possibilities of life that must be shared by all participants--actors with actors, actors with spectators, and spectators with spectators--at the moment they come together in a theatre and acknowledge one another in intimate assembly. Kazimierz Braun spent his own life in the theatre struggling to realize this vision of the intimately shared experience of life and theatre that he would come to call his "theatre of the community." It is this central idea, and Braun's slow progress toward its realization in his theatre work, that will be the focus of the following pages.

Kazimierz Braun worked as a professional director, scholar, theorist of the theatre, and university teacher during his nearly twenty-five year career in the theatre in Poland. He served as the Artistic Director of two major state repertory theatres, and has written nine books of theatre history and critical theory. He is also a successful playwright. His career spans the most daring, productive, and turbulent years in the history of Polish theatre. He began his professional training as a director shortly after the "Great Thaw" of 1956, which marked the end of the Stalinist period and ushered in a period of liberalization and relaxed censorship in Poland. This fresh breath of freedom produced a Renaissance in Polish theatre, and enabled it both to open itself up to the latest avant-garde experiments from the West, and to rediscover the rich traditions of its own Romantic poetry and drama.

The 1960s and 1970s witnessed an unprecedented growth of the power of Polish theatre to act as a voice of national unity, collective resistance, and deep historical memory for the people of Poland. Not only did the theatre rediscover the greatness of its own past, it also produced a new generation of playwrights such as Sławomir Mrożek and Tadeusz Różewicz, who would soon become known to the world for their bold experiments with theatrical form, and for their willingness to push ideas to their limit.

Braun pursued his professional career as a director during these heady, but often unsettled, times. The culmination of his work in the theatre came in the tempestuous years leading up to and following the rise of Solidarity. His career came to a sudden end in the dark period following the imposition of Martial Law. Coinciding as it does with those years of high expectations and bold experiment, Braun's career is both representative and anomalous. Throughout his years as a director in Poland, Braun participated in the long European tradition of a national theatre, and worked continuously within the state system of repertory theatres until his dismissal from his post as Artistic Director of Współczesny Theatre in the summer of 1984. That system bestowed on him generous artistic opportunities, just as it imposed certain obvious government constraints. Braun was talented and ambitious, and he matured rapidly in his art. He quickly established his reputation as a strong, assured, but independently minded, director. He would cause problems.

Braun was also artistically restless and adventurous, and he constantly looked for possibilities to push himself into new theatrical territory. Very early in his career he began to incorporate into his more traditional theatre work a number of the significant new trends in world theatre that sought inspiration far from the confines and security of the institutional theatre that he called home. Braun was

especially receptive to the latest movements in Europe and America which could be generally characterized as the new "tribalism" in the theatre. As he himself says, he became "possessed" by the work of Joseph Chaikin, Richard Schechner, The Living Theatre, and Bread and Puppet Theatre, which he saw on his visits to America and when many of these artists and ensembles visited Poland in the 1960s.[2] This new movement espoused a fresh ethos that sought to discover a whole new relationship between performers and spectators, a relationship that would be based on joyous celebration and active participation; that is, "community."

Braun's own vision of a "theatre of the community" grew out of his attempt to marry these two disparate (some would say antagonistic) traditions: the old European tradition of a national or state theatre, and the new ritual/communal theatre that flourished in the 1960s and early 1970s. This new "communal" spirit was most strongly manifested in the work of Jerzy Grotowski, Peter Brook, Ariane Mnouchkine, and many others including the Americans. But if these two traditions or visions of theatre seem, on the surface, to be antagonistic or even mutually exclusive, they do possess, at their heart, a common ethos. That ethos is "community," and its spirit is especially strong and vital in Poland, where it lives in the soul of the entire nation. And if Braun attempted to reinvigorate this ancient Polish idea of community by drawing on the new theatre work being done outside

Poland, the Polish people were, at the same time, struggling to transform the very nature of that community from within, that is, from within themselves.

It is impossible to understand and assess Kazimierz Braun's contribution to contemporary Polish, and world, theatre without gaining some appreciation for the unprecedented transformation of social and cultural life that overtook Poland in the late seventies. This transformation can be summed up in one word: solidarność, "solidarity," and this word must be applied, not only to a national union of shipbuilders led by a simple Gdańsk electrician but to millions of people throughout the country who united in opposition to an increasingly repressive regime. This regeneration of the spirit of community could be called a "politics of life" that stood opposed to the "politics of death" practiced by the authorities.[3] It advocated sustaining the faith and dignity of the people through simple acts of kindness, generosity, and sacrifice that could be carried out day-to-day on behalf of one's family, friends, and neighbors.

It was an idea of community made simple, tangible, and real, and it was purged of its quintessentially Polish attributes of mystical and millennial dreaming. This dreaming of a resurrected community has long been fostered by a politically enslaved country that has seen itself, for over two hundred years, living out a supra-historical destiny.

True community would be restored only through the final liberation of Poland from foreign tyranny, and through the restitution of its national integrity. But in the late seventies an idea took hold that enabled a community to survive, not through final victory, but through sheer determination, faith, and the will to endure.

Braun wished to create a theatre that would serve this renewed idea of community, not by constructing extravagant dreams of ancient heroism and noble martyrdom but by entering directly into the daily life of that community. He wanted his theatre to be a public forum, a genuine meeting place, in which the people of Poland could come together and resolve the best way to live their lives and sustain their faith and dignity in the face of a grimly determined and systematic opposition. This is the essence of Braun's theatre, and its great contribution of Polish and world theatre.

I have chosen to call Braun's life and work in the theatre a "progress" for two reasons. One is that, because of his eagerness to incorporate new ideas and creative methods into his theatre work, there is some critical opinion that suggests that his career should be viewed as a series of brilliant theatrical coups, and that he capitalized on the latest avant-garde fashions to make a name for himself as a rising star in a new generation of directors. Braun was, indeed, uncommonly receptive to the movement that

the Poles call the "open" theatre, but his restless desire for change stemmed from a genuine dissatisfaction with the current state of the theatre in Poland which manifested itself in his work at the very start of his career. Braun lived and worked during years of accelerated change in Poland and, in many ways, change defines his life and work. But however it is finally judged, Braun's work must be seen as all of a piece, and consequently the following pages will focus on certain key productions that he directed over the entire twenty-five years that he worked in Poland. I believe that an investigation of these productions will clearly demonstrate that Braun's career has been a genuine "progress," and that his vision of a "theatre of the community" grew slowly out of, and built steadily upon, all his earlier work.

To further substantiate this argument, particular attention will be given to Braun's work with the plays of Tadeusz Różewicz, with whom Braun collaborated, on and off, for fifteen of those twenty-five years. Różewicz is the most uncompromising and unorthodox poet/playwright in contemporary Polish theatre. He is also one of the most controversial. If Braun drew on the theatre outside Poland for much of his inspiration, he found his richest source of ideas and theatrical challenge in his own fiercely independent countryman. The close collaboration of Braun

and Różewicz is itself a long progress and an ongoing dialogue about the theatre carried out in the theatre.

The second reason I have chosen to define Braun's career as a progress is that the word strongly suggests the sense of inner directedness and singular resolve that characterizes Braun's own articulation of his vision of theatre. To a significant degree, the following pages attempt to record the life's work of a theatre director as he lived it, as he saw it through his own eyes, and as he recalled it in his own words. I have been able to do this, in large part, because of Kazimierz Braun's enormous generosity in sharing with me the source of his thinking about the theatre, the evolution of his ideas, and their realization in his productions. It is my sincere intention to provide not just an historical but a living record of Braun's work in the theatre and its impact on the life of his times. The following pages are offered as one man's testimony of how he used theatre to help shape and sustain the life of his community at critical moments in its history, and how he tried to create circumstances for that life "to be born, to be discovered, to be."

I realize that this approach may be viewed as lacking the proper objectivity or critical distance to make a fair assessment of Braun's work, and I do intend to allow critics, scholars, and other theatre practitioners in Poland and America to express their own views on his contribution to

contemporary Polish and world theatre. But I do not intend to do this for the sake of objectivity or balance. I wish rather to cast Braun's twenty-five year career in Polish theatre in the sharpest possible relief. Objectivity is a risky proposition at best when discussing such an ephemeral and public art as theatre. Artistic considerations are inevitably intermingled with, and often swamped by, political, ideological, and historical judgments. This is especially true in Poland, which, despite its ethos of community, is a deeply divided country when it comes to questions of art. This internal division is reflected in the ongoing debate about the theatre and its place in Polish history, politics, and culture. Braun stood at the center of this critical storm, and I hope to capture some sense of the "drama" of this debate in the following pages. It should be said that this division is further exacerbated by the fact that in a totalitarian system there is always an official and an unofficial position that one may adopt, and that position rarely reflects a purely objective or disinterested judgment.

This dissertation is offered, then, as a story, but I hope it will be read less as the story of one man's life and work in the theatre than as the story of the life and culture of an entire people seen through the eyes of one man during an extraordinary period of their history. True to Poland's history, it is a story that takes the explosive

form of theatre. The result, I hope, will be a vivid and dramatic portrait of this unique and turbulent period of Poland's national life as it was crystallized and given voice through the work of one man: Kazimierz Braun.

CHAPTER I:

THEATRE OF THE COMMUNITY: A DEFINITION

The theatre space should be a meeting place.[1]

For the people of Poland, the theatre provides much more than a voice of national pride or spiritual sustenance, it guides and comforts them in their search for destiny. It is a destiny which, if it is ultimately proven to have been glorious, has been for the last two hundred years (and may yet continue to be) absurdly cruel. A once great and powerful nation, Poland has suffered at the hand of history. It has borne the humiliation of the Partitions, which swept the country from the map of Europe. It has suffered repeated invasion and occupation, and witnessed, first-hand, the horror of twentieth century totalitarianism. History seems to have either played a cosmically macabre joke on Poland and her people, or it has chosen them as the instrument of its own redemption, whereby the Poles will one day render history's unspeakably destructive forces comprehensible. More so perhaps than in any other country, the theatre in Poland is charged with the responsibility to sustain the spiritual strength of an entire people as they struggle daily in their search for a destiny beyond humiliation, oppression, and national suffering.

It has been a centuries-long search, and has given rise at times to foolish hopes and reckless expectations. Understandably, the Poles have often been enthralled by a millennial vision of history which sees their destiny consummated in a moment of glorious collective resistance that wins victory and national liberation against all odds. In his book devoted to the life and artistic career of the poet and playwright Stanisław Wyspiański, Tymon Terlecki examines this crucial role that the vision of chwila osobliwa, or "long-awaited moment," has played in Polish history.[2] Terlecki examines this vision as it is treated by Wyspiański in his cosmic national drama, The Wedding, which was written in 1901 and based on an actual event of the time--the marriage of a gentry poet who belonged to a fashionable literary circle in Krakow to a simple peasant girl. Wyspiański takes a highly ironic look at this marriage celebration of rare poetic sensibility and wholesome rustic values which would, it was believed, unite the nation from top to bottom and restore its proud sense of historical destiny. But the thrill of the "long-awaited moment" induces in the wedding guests an intoxication with dreams and reveries of past glories. The play ends at dawn in a slow, hypnotic dance of lost souls, a deeply unsettling theatrical image of the fatal danger of dreaming and waiting for the right "moment".

This profound notion of a "moment" in Polish history when political, social, and spiritual forces will converge and galvanize the courage and moral strength of the entire nation was spawned by the great national poets of Poland who fled into exile in 1830, following the humiliation of the failed insurrection against czarist Russia. The sweeping epic dramas written by Adam Mickiewicz, Zygmunt Krasiński, and Juliusz Słowacki were intended as prophecies of national destiny and as inspired exhortations to struggle, sacrifice, and cherish a sense of sacred purpose. One day Poland, the "Christ of nations" in European history, would be resurrected and restored to its former glory. Polish romantic drama was a spiritual call to arms addressed to the nation, and it is an idea that still lives today in Poland in a fierce national pride that thrives on daring symbolic acts of defiance, grim monuments to political martyrdom, and spontaneous acts of mass protest. Solidarity was the eruption of just such a "moment," as Lawrence Weschler describes it in his book The Passion of Poland: From Solidarity Through the State of War. As he says, "Unless the moment is right, extraordinary people seem doomed to fail; when the moment is right, it seems, ordinary people can't help excelling. Or rather, ordinary people become imbued with extraordinary qualities--courage, character, and solidarity."[3] But the question immediately arises: when is the

moment right? How long must one wait? And more problematic, who or what decides that the moment is right, and if that decision is wrong, who bears responsibility for the failure of the "moment"?

In the twentieth century the theatre in Poland has gradually come to play a critical role in the realization of that right moment. After the turn of the century, Leon Schiller, the father of modern Polish stage direction, became the first director to produce the romantic dramas of all three poets--Mickiewicz, Słowacki, and Krasiński--as vast, epic spectacles. He treated those plays as great poetic literature and repositories of national culture, but he also saw in them the expression of recurrent political and historical crises. As Marta Fik writes in an article on the twenty-fifth anniversary of Schiller's death, "Schiller looked at the plays with the eyes of a contemporary man and artist. He did not distort the text, but moved the accents to what he felt was still alive."[4] Through the inheritance of Schiller, modern Polish theatre, especially in the last thirty years since the "Thaw" of 1956, has galvanized the will and spirit of the people by exposing, at critical moments, the subterranean forces of history and political power with stark clarity and courage.

Such a moment was the 1967 production of Mickiewicz's Forefathers' Eve, staged by Kazimierz Dejmek at the National Theatre in Warsaw. The play is the sanctification of Polish

history, and it apotheosizes the country's heroic struggle against Russian oppression which led to the Insurrection of 1830. It is the sacred national drama of Poland, and Dejmek staged it during a year of intensified political unrest, imprisonment of dissident intellectuals such as Jacek Kuron, and wide-spread student demonstrations. In his book, The Polish August, Neal Ascherson quotes a young girl who attended the production before it was closed by the authorities: "[It was] one of the culminating points of my generation."[5] The fervent anti-Russian feeling of the play ignited violent applause, and the closing of the production by the authorities produced a spontaneous street demonstration that had to be broken up by the police.

What the preceding paragraphs have tried to make clear is that the theatre in Poland has always been, in its soul, a "theatre of the community," and that in order to understand and assess the contribution of Kazimierz Braun's highly individual, even idiosyncratic, vision of the theatre one must first understand that he participates in a long and deeply honored tradition of a national theatre and of stage direction. As Daniel Gerould argues in an article in World Literature Today, even the rigorous and esoteric theatre work of Jerzy Grotowski, in particular his paratheatrical work since 1970, has been an attempt to unearth the sacred roots of ancient community by transforming the theatre performance into "a ceremonial capable of uniting actor and

spectator, a communal and collective creation that will transform its participants and reorder their lives."[6] But as the example of Grotowski testifies, the theatre in Poland is not only a collective expression of millennial dreams and national glory; it is an arena of intense self-examination, rigorous moral choice, and spiritual austerity.

Polish theatre not only celebrates the soul of community, it also provides a forum in which the race can examine its own conscience, debate the moral issues of the day, and seek a sense of purpose and a course of action. Kazimierz Braun's vision of theatre shares fully in that sacred tradition of collective memory, but he adapts it and reshapes it to meet the challenge of difficult and spiritually demanding times. Perhaps the most distinctive feature of Braun's theatre is its sense of the urgency and tangibility of the moment of performance. He wanted to create a theatre in the very midst of people's lives. For him, theatre is fundamentally a social act, and his productions, as they evolved over twenty-five years, took on the atmosphere of an informal gathering or meeting in which people came together to confront and share their urgent concerns about faith, moral choice, and spiritual courage. Braun tried to locate his theatre in the "here and now," as Justyna Hoffman describes it, at a moment when "a particular man, a particular group of people has a chance to reject loneliness, to reject one's being lost in the ways of the

world."[7] Braun's idea of community possesses an almost sociological, as opposed to mystical, spirit, and his theatre attempts to capture a sense of the immediate, as opposed to the millennial, crisis in Poland's collective struggle with history and political power.

It is the unique inspiration of the Polish theatre that it brings the moral exhortations of the nation's ancient struggles to bear on brutal, contemporary events. The intention is never to mock or trivialize the current struggle, but to inject into the squalor of present crises the impetus of destiny. In Poland, a director inherits a glorious and revered theatre tradition, but he also assumes a moral responsibility to seek out the truth of the times and help his audience to face it with courage and spiritual stamina. This responsibility becomes most acute during times of stepped-up repression and overt brutality when the temptation to retreat into the reverie of past glory and heroic resistance often produces a spiritually masochistic art of "moans and shackles," as Stanislaw Rodziński characterizes it.[8] The temptation became almost unbearable after December 13, 1981. The Poles have a passion, some would say an addiction, for grand symbolic gestures, and that passion can produce an art that is a kind of narcotic, filled with banal images of noble martyrs, leering oppressors, and mystical portents. The danger always lurks near that the "moment" may be fabricated, bloated with high emotion and

rhetoric, and end, as do the wedding guests in Wyspiański's play, in a stupor of failed dreams. During such periods of grave uncertainty and personal risk, the theatre in Poland must choose between splendid images and rough truth, facile emotions and a deeper feeling of community. Many theatres, including some of the best, made the easy choice.

It is in the light of this burden of responsibility and choice that I would like to examine the artistic life and professional career of Kazimierz Braun, and the contribution he has made to the Polish theatre in the twenty-five years before he was removed from his position as Artistic Director of Teatr Współczesny (The Contemporary Theatre) in Wrocław. It is a burden that Braun accepted with full awareness of his responsibility to his country and to his times. His career must be examined as a long progress toward what was for him the right "moment." It came in the spring of 1983 when he produced his adaptation of Albert Camus's The Plague at Współczesny as a response to the epidemic of hopelessness inflicted by Martial Law. His bitter struggle with the authorities for permission to stage it would eventually cost him his artistic life and professional career in Poland. Jacek Weksler, Braun's Managing Director at Współczesny, offers a possible explanation for taking so great a risk at such a politically dangerous time. Braun was perhaps attempting to define who the "real" audience of his theatre was, not the audience who came solely for intellectual

stimulation or cultural enrichment, but the audience who came to satisfy a profound need, deepened by the dark uncertainty of the times, for true "community." Braun, suggests Weksler, wanted to find out who his real friends were.[9] I would argue otherwise.

The production of The Plague was not the product of a reckless strategy by Braun to create, in the midst of moral defeat and demoralization, an enclave of solidarity and brave resistance. It was the culmination of over twenty years work in the theatre in Poland. According to him, The Plague represented the fullest realization of a kind of theatre that he had come to call, as early as 1970, a "theatre of the community."[10] The production was meant to speak in stark and insistent images directly to the people sitting in Współczesny Theatre at that moment about conditions--political and spiritual--that affected their lives in a profound and immediate way. Despite the paranoic reaction of the authorities, Braun steadfastly maintains that the production was not meant as a flagrant gesture of defiance or open condemnation of the regime. The production was addressed to his own community, and was intended to provide spiritual solace and inspire courage, but on a personal, even private, level, not on a grand historical scale.[11]

The presence of an infection that is devastating the land is a hard fact and must be fought, but daily in one's own life, and not through reckless demonstrations of mass

resistance. The threat of the plague was not that it represented an insidious external force, but that it could easily infect anyone at any time, even in one's own home. One had to choose each day to be free, to be moral, to be human. One was always free to choose, as Jonathan Schell says, the "politics of life" to oppose the "politics of death" that is the plague. Braun produced The Plague at that precise "moment" because it expressed what he felt his audience, his community, craved to hear in order to survive during very dark and politically dislocated times. It is the purpose of this chapter to define and carefully chart the slow growth of this "theatre of the community;" to ground it in a long-established tradition of Polish theatre practice; and to demonstrate its valuable contribution, as Braun evolved it, to the demands of extraordinary times, in particular the later 1970s and early 1980s in Poland.

In an address delivered at the Theatre of Nations Symposium in Warsaw in 1975, Jean Darcante, Secretary General of the International Theatre Institute, described two major trends that had been developing in world theatre since World War II. He called these two trends the "easy royal road" and the "hard road." The royal road was represented by the great auteur directors such as Peter Hall, Peter Stein, and Giorgio Strehler, who mounted powerful and magnificent productions in the huge, state-subsidized theatres of Europe. The hard road was being taken by such radical

experimentalists as Ariane Mnouchkine, Peter Brook, and of course Grotowski, who were far less interested in simply mounting productions than in completely rethinking and redefining the very idea of what constitutes a theatre performance. They were intent upon rediscovering a lost bond between actors and audience that would achieve greater intimacy and reach deeper levels of shared experience than traditional western theatre had been able to tap. These directors were not only reconceiving theatre as an artform, but questioning where it should take place and how it might be created. Furthermore, Darcante maintained, the existence of these two trends demanded that, inevitably, a choice would have to be made between them and that, in 1975, the future of world theatre seemed to lie down the difficult and hazardous "hard road."[12]

Kazimierz Braun's work in the theatre is unique in Poland, and in the world, because he refused to make that choice. He did not go down either road. Braun has attempted in his career to embrace and incorporate both these major trends. He envisioned a new form of theatre that would be exciting and accessible to a wide national audience, and also act as a source of intimate contact and genuine acknowledgement between actors and audience, as well as among the audience members themselves. Braun has had considerable experience in both traditions. He received his training in the long-established European tradition of the director as

an inspired leader of a large repertory theatre that is state-subsidized, splendidly technically equipped, and amply supported artistically by a full resident acting company and production staff. Similar to other European national theatres such as the West German Stadttheatres, the Polish theatre operates as a repertory system subsidized by the regime. Trained in the Department of Stage Direction at the State School of Drama in Warsaw from 1958 to 1961 (at that time the only such department in Poland), Braun embarked on an extremely successful career as a director within this state system, and remained devoted to it until the end of his artistic life in Poland in 1984. He is both artistically and ideologically committed to the vision of a large, national theatre network.

The training at the Drama School is rooted in the tradition of Leon Schiller, Poland's first great modern theatre director, whose vision of a "monumental" theatre demanded vast spectacle, complete integration of the entire mise-en-scène, and an exceedingly sure conceptual control over all the elements of staging. Schiller evolved his expansive vision of theatre to accommodate the great national epic dramas of Mickiewicz, Krasiński, and Słowacki, and this vision of what Poles call the "monumental" theatre was a projection of his quest for a national theatre of great literature and great spectacle. Grounded in the staging principles of Gordon Craig and Wyspiański, it could

be called the theatre of mise-en-scène, and it was in this tradition that Braun was trained as a young directing student.

Braun worked in this tradition throughout his career in Poland, and he makes no apologies or excuses for enjoying the luxury of lavish technical facilities and the financial security supplied by the state to produce theatre on a grand scale. His vision of theatre has always been wide and ambitious, and he matured quickly and assuredly as a theatre artist through his work in this state system. He made his reputation very early in part through his successful staging of a number of Polish national dramas such as Wyspiański's The Wedding and November Night, which is a sweeping historical epic about the Insurrection of 1830. He also staged several plays by Cyprian Norwid, another national poet-playwright of the nineteenth century. Because of their epic scale and immense theatrical challenge, these plays demand an absolutely sure directorial hand and a complete command of all the artistic and technical resources of the theatre. These plays are not often attempted by directors in Poland until they have reached full maturity as artists. Braun's rapid maturity and early success as a theatre artist can be attested to by the fact that he had been named Artistic Director of a large state theatre, Teatr imienia Juliusza Osterwy (the Julius Osterwa Theatre) in Lublin, by the time he was thirty years old.

His personal artistic ambitions aside, Braun also believes passionately in the idea of an official national theatre that would be accessible to a wide popular audience.[13] He considers it an absolute cultural necessity, an artistic privilege, and even a fundamental right of the people. He accepts very seriously the mandate of the professional theatre in Poland to provide an arena of public debate and a rich source of cultural education for a mass audience. For Braun, Polish theatre must be a theatre for the whole nation played out on the stage of history. Throughout his career, despite growing contention with the authorities, Braun remained committed to the ideal of a national theatre that would address the critical problems of the times on behalf of all the people of Poland.

But along with his devotion to the tradition of a national theatre, Braun very early in his career, as I have said, began to explore the radical methods and ideas of what had become known in the sixties and seventies as the new "ritual/communal" theatre movement in Poland, Europe, and particularly in America. He immediately saw in this movement, which was transforming the creative ethos of much of world theatre, its potential to envigorate and deepen his country's own heritage of theatre as a cultural and social force in the lives of the people. Braun slowly began to incorporate the radical performance methods of theatre collectives led by Grotowski, Chaikin, Schechner, Julian

Beck and Judith Malina, Peter Schumann of Bread and Puppet Theatre, and other itinerant and vagabond theatre troupes that performed in city streets, in warehouses, and under circus tents. He began, as early as 1970, to work to make his theatre more informal and intimate, more directly participatory, and finally, simply more genuinely communal, even as he continued to head major repertory theatres in Lublin and, for the last ten years of his career, in Wrocław. Braun's career in Polish theatre must be seen as a long, difficult merging of these two postwar trends in world theatre practice--the "royal road" of the state theatres and the "hard road" of the collectives devoted to an ethos of spiritual tribalism and intimate celebration.

In particular, Braun became absorbed with two critical problems that many theatre artists and collectives of the sixties and seventies were struggling to solve. It would be perhaps more accurate to call them barriers that these men and women were determined to break through. One was the barrier of space or environment, which drove many theatre collectives to violate, and eventually to abandon altogether, the theatre building itself as the splendid mansion of art. The received tradition of the theatre space as a solemn place of awe and imaginative transport was anathema to those theatre groups whose intensive ensemble work had begun to focus on anthropological, as opposed to aesthetic, questions, especially when they probed the fundamental

relationship between the performers and their immediate audience. These groups proceeded to define the theatre event first as a social, sacred, or exuberantly tribal gathering, rather than as a discreet, formal event bound by laws of aesthetic decorum.

This physical barrier of the theatrical space or environment actually grew out of a more all-encompassing cultural barrier, enforced by the theatre event, that separated the actors and their audience. Particularly frustrating was the chronic passivity of the audience who, in the traditional theatre of illusion, were subjected to the tyranny of a performance that dictated meaning, significance, and values through its mesmeric hold on the audience's imagination. This centuries-long petrification (begun in the Renaissance with Italianate illusionistic scenery) of what should be an immediate, exuberant, and freely shared gathering eventually drove groups like The Living Theatre, The Open Theatre, Bread and Puppet, Grand Magic Circus in Paris, and Eugenio Barba's Odin Teatret out of the theatre building into the streets, into the open countryside and forests, and (in the case of Grotowski) up the sides of mountains. This whole movement would provide Braun with both the inspiration and the methodology to transform his own theatre gradually into a true "theatre of the community."

But unlike radical innovators like Grotowski, Brook, and Schechner, Braun did not abandon the traditional western theatre and its rigid code of hierarchical cultural values. Rather he brought this new spirit of jubilant tribalism and communal intimacy into his theatre in an attempt to transform it. He wanted to dismantle the old theatre structure of inherited values, forms, and traditions, and rebuild it from within. In his long philosophical essay Teatr Wspólnoty ("The Theatre of the Community"), written in 1970,[14] Braun professes his deep appreciation for this new theatre movement and traces its genealogy back to various religious and tribal ceremonies and pre-theatrical rituals in which the barrier between performers and spectators was virtually non-existent. In these rites the entire tribe participated, and the success or failure of each ceremony depended on the active contribution of everyone within the performance itself.

But Braun is equally insistent in his assertion that the value of these primitive rites lay in the fact that they occurred in the very midst of the daily life of the society. Braun rejects the idea, promulgated by many of the communal theatres of the sixties and seventies, that the theatre, in order to be truly communal, had to turn its back on the ordinary lives of its audience and create a kind of artificial community of Eden in an unspoiled natural terrain, or subject them to marathon encounter sessions in some sealed-

off space in order to strip off the masks of their "civilized" selves. It was, and continues to be, Braun's conviction that theatre must occur, as he writes in his essay, "right here, right now."[15] For him, the theatre is essentially a meeting, a temporary and informal (but urgent) gathering of people who come together to share and explore the crises, aspirations, and purpose of their lives at a particular moment in a particular place. People do not leave their private lives behind when they enter the theatre envisioned by Braun. On the contrary, the audience in his theatre become acutely aware of themselves in the company of other people quite like themselves, both on the stage and in the audience, people with families, dreams, economic struggles, questions about the future, and private moral crises. They recognize themselves as a community. It is not a question of where the theatre must take its audience, but what the audience will bring to the theatre, that Braun asks and attempts to answer in all his work.

Braun is unique among these spiritual and theatrical "essentialists" in that he refuses to turn his back on or derogate the immediate problems and personal crises that his audience must face every day of their lives, and which they must inevitably bring with them into the theatre. On the contrary, it is the sincere acknowledgement of this common bond of time and place and of the shared burden of living through times of doubt, fear, and hope that creates a true

sense of community in Braun's theatre. Braun does not share the prevailing prejudice of the ritual/communal theatre against the supposed triviality and superficiality of the ordinary lives of people. He also rejects the notion that theatre should aspire to something more intensely "real" than everyday life, or that it should expunge every vestige of artifice and theatricality in its quest for a more authentic bond between performers and spectators. Braun believes that artifice and theatricality are an intrinsic and active creative force in cultural life, and it is through the careful construction of illusion and the conscious use of theatrical spectacle that the theatre can provide a glass for examining the historical, cultural, and spiritual forces out of which we forge our collective lives.

It would not be an exaggeration, I think, to call Braun a "fan" of the theatre, who expresses an unabashed and even naive delight in the construction and play of the magic of artifice on the stage. He sees theatre as a way of releasing the mind into its own field of play. Theatre provides us with an ether of consciousness, a volatile medium in which thought can reconstruct the world and its own innate power to re-imagine and re-create reality. It has always been Braun's contention that the theatre must not only retain its independence as an artistic institution, but also its autonomy as a performance medium.[16] Unless the theatre openly acknowledges its source in artifice, which Braun

believes supplies its singular animating energy, it risks becoming something it is not, an ersatz mass, an ideological pageant, a severe tale of moral edification. Braun sees theatre causing a chemical reaction between the free play of artifice and its confrontation with the hard, implacable facts of daily life.

To achieve this reaction, Braun tried to bring all the rich resources of the large, state-subsidized theatre to bear on the most urgent problems his audience faced as they lived each day of their lives, and as they struggled to maintain their sense of community in the face of political, economic, and moral crises. In essence, Braun's vision of a theatre of the community attempted to marry the tradition of the "monumental" theatre of spectacle and mise-en-scène with the most recent trends in world theatre toward greater intimacy, celebration, and participation between actors and spectators as, together in the theatre, they faced life and history's great questions and universal ordeals.

This marriage of the traditional theatre of spectacle and illusion with the theatre of renewed tribalism is, I believe, Kazimierz Braun's original and lasting contribution to our contemporary theatre culture. In practice, Braun's theatre attempts to create a common ground or shared theatrical environment in which familiar and tangible fragments of contemporary life and culture are suspended, and then are closely examined for new meaning under a starkly artificial

theatrical light. Braun places his audience within this charged theatrical field and then confronts them with the fragments of their lives at a moment of profound social crisis. The spectator is both continually made aware that s/he is in the midst of a performance at the same time that s/he is brought into almost uncomfortable proximity to disturbingly recognizable fragments of reality. It is the spectator, finally, who must negotiate and merge these two startlingly disparate theatrical experiences and perspectives. An essential component of Braun's vision of theatre is that he invites (never commands) his audience to participate fully and intently in the performance as an audience, and if he continually startles them with the reminder that they are watching a performance in a theatre it is always with the purpose of allowing them to retain their personal autonomy in order to examine, digest, and search for their own meaning in a vivid stage poetry composed of theatrical images, scene fragments, and participatory action.

What is most important for Braun is that the audience always be aware of itself as an audience, both individually and as a social unit or even micro-community. His audience is given a measure of independence, but also of responsibility, to forsake the luxury of indifference and instead make judgments and accept the personal implications for themselves, as members of a community, of the moral, political,

and philosophical questions being raised in the theatre. Above all, Braun wants his audience to meet each other, and the actors, on common ground and as equal partners.

In his long, intensely envisioned, and passionately argued manifesto for a theatre of the community, Braun sets forth his central thesis that the third and last stage in the evolution of the modern theatre must, inevitably, be "the collective creation of the actors and the spectators. As a community. On the stage and in the audience."[17] World theatre has already undergone two "reforms," as Braun calls them: the "great reform" of Craig, Ibsen, Chekhov, Leon Schiller, Brecht, and Stanislavski; and the "second reform" of Brook, Grotowski, Barba, and the entire ritual/communal theatre movement.[18] Braun finds his inspiration for this new participatory theatre in the pre-theatre rituals of primitive tribes, in what he calls, paraphrasing Lévi-Strauss, the "savage theatre."[19] However, he makes certain crucial assessments in his investigation of these rituals and ceremonies that distinguish him from the ecstatic tribalists like Beck and Malina, and the environmentalists like Richard Schechner.

Most important and revealing to Braun was his understanding that each member of the tribe is a participant and personally responsible for the success or failure of a given rite. Even the role of spectator is active and critical to the success of a ritual. In some rituals, Braun argues,

individuals may be, alternately, participants and spectators, with the ritual culminating in a celebration in which the distinction between "actor" and "spectator" becomes obliterated. But Braun lays much less stress on the element of savage celebration than on the critical working-out of a trial or life-task undertaken by the entire tribe. His chief paradigm example is the initiation into sexual maturity of young men. Braun very much anticipates the theories of theatre anthropologists such as Victor Turner, whose studies of ritual performance draw similar conclusions.

As I previously pointed out, the anchor of Braun's theory of a theatre of the community is based upon his understanding that the theatrical space used for the enactment of these rituals was created in the very midst of the daily life of the members of the tribe. This communal space was not set aside as a sacred place, but was invested with the magic of enactment at the moment it was needed by the tribe. This space could be the town square, the market place, or simply a central open area of the village. Greek tragic festivals were originally enacted in the agora, and even earlier in the vineyards dedicated to Dionysus where dithyrambs were sung and danced. These rituals were enacted in a common, ordinary location which was transformed, not by the magical, incantatory power of theatre, so much as by the coming together of the entire tribe to work through its recurrent crises of survival, security, continuity. It

was this crucial "here and now" element that made the performance live and that released its restorative power.

Although it would take him a number of years to evolve, Braun early on began to create a kind of theatre and form of mise-en-scène that would bring his audience together in a common theatrical space, as a community, to meditate on and work through the immediate crises of their daily lives. The form of this theatre would eventually come to be called "realistico-poetic," since it sought to bring the audience into proximity with disturbing and palpable pieces of reality extracted from their shared experiences, while at the same time openly acknowledging the fact that what they were witnessing was a performance. The purpose of this distancing was to make the spectators more deeply aware of each other, to heighten the sense of "meeting" in the theatre at a particular time and place, a meeting that included both actors and spectators. Distance also intensified the sense of witnessing these torn fragments of lived reality by eliminating the narcotic of traditional illusion. Hence the paradoxical joining of "realistic" and "poetical" components in the performance.

Braun's vision of a "realistico-poetic" theatre became the fundamental creative principle for the construction of a new mise-en-scène for this theatre. But it was his theory of a theatre of space which enabled him to reconstruct not only his mise-en-scène but the entire relationship between

the performance event and the audience. Braun adheres quite closely to the anarchic principles of Beck and Malina, Chaikin, and Schechner in his rejection of the rigidly organized and compartmentalized space of the traditional theatre of illusion. He rejects this theatre, descended from the Italian stage of artifice and mystification, on political grounds, because it is so thoroughly encoded with the rigid, hierarchical values of class and social status. The traditional theatre of illusion divides and isolates space, and prohibits the genuine meeting of individuals on the common ground of shared cultural values and social crises. Traditional theatre also tyrannizes space by inducing imaginative lethargy in the audience and reducing the theatre performance to a passive spectacle.

Braun does not want to strip the theatre space down to a neutral void or empty space within which a purer bond of intimacy will surge among the sharers in the performance event. Neither does he want to abandon the building completely. Space must first create intimacy in Braun's theatre, but it is an intimacy that brings the world close and renders it startlingly true by virtue of its material reconstitution in the theatre. This crude materiality that the theatre possesses, and which distinguishes it from all other artforms, plays a crucial role in Braun's theatre of the community. He traces this power of the theatre to intensify our perception of the world and sharpen our sense

of its reality to the rise of realistic theatre practice at the turn of the century, particularly in the work of Andre' Antoine and Stanislavski.

Braun feels that the tradition of realism still can play a crucial role in the contemporary theatre, and that the rude presence of bodies, voices, common objects, smells, and immediately recognizable social actions and rituals creates a potent stage poetry drawn from the very life of the people who come to the theatre. As he says in his article "Theatre Space: Postulates," "What is needed there, is space allowing spectators really to sit down together with the hero of the play inside the room, at the bar, or in the cellar, look so close at the actor's face, his hand and the glass held in the hand. . . . What is needed is space which would give the actor the possibility of using real, not necessarily 'stage' whispers, allow objects to speak--a hundred years ago this was the dream of [the] naturalists . . ."[20] The space that Braun sought to reconstruct in his theatre had to serve both the intensified confrontation with reality, and also the demands of intensified theatricality.

During the 1970s Braun became increasingly interested in disrupting and eventually obliterating the traditional coded arrangement of the theatre space. Bringing people onto the stage to surround the action, moving them to different locations in the theatre building, and even taking them outside the building itself, enabled Braun to bring the

world back into the theatre and reactivate his audience's awareness that what they were seeing was real and immediate and tangible, and not the theatrical distillation of a playwright's private contemplation of the world. By tearing the veil of illusion in the theatre, Braun was attempting to reinstate the potent reality of the world outside it and demand that his audience confront that reality, probe it, and search through its dense mystery for its meaning in their lives. Braun's constant disruption of the traditional lines of demarcation in the theatre (stage, auditorium, lobby, etc.), and his continual shifting of the location of scenes within the performance, kept his audience grounded in the real and intensified their perception that what they were watching impinges on their lives even at the moment they are in the theatre.

Space for Braun, both inside and outside the theatre, does not need to be either particularly atmospheric or, in Peter Brook's sense, "empty." It can be, and often is, quite common and even familiar. The sudden shifts in location, and the fluctuations in the spatial relationships of the actors and audience, are not meant to disorient or intimidate but to forestall the lethargy that so easily overtakes an audience in the presence of the mesmerizing power of theatrical illusion. Space serves to reinstate the autonomy of the spectator by making him or her acutely aware

of him or herself as audience, as a participant with something at stake in the performance. The startled awareness that one is present at a particular "location" shared by actors and audience reinforces the reality of the "here and now" of the performance and the sense of theatre as a public gathering.

If the constant shifting of physical space and location forces the audience to view the performance with stark clarity and at close range, it also enables them to view it from surprisingly new perspectives and with fresh insight. By disrupting the chronically stationary perspective of traditional theatre space, Braun places his audience in the midst of the experience, and the unfolding action can then be viewed, not as a linear progression of Aristotelian inevitability but as a dense milieu of modern life through which the spectators pass together. If Braun's use of space allows his audience a measure of autonomy and distance within the performance, it never permits them the luxury of idle detachment. They remain always in the midst of the performance. Unlike Brecht's theory of alienation, which demands a cool and logical response of the mind to the action portrayed on the stage, Braun's vision of theatre demands a more personal and difficult response requiring moral choice, emotional sensitivity, poetic feeling, and deep human understanding. His audience must respond on many

different levels, but the most important one is of course the human level.

Braun's theory of space in the theatre serves really one preeminent consideration: that the theatre performance be a true meeting of individuals. The deepest awareness that a spectator discovers in the theatre as envisioned by Braun is not of the performance but of him or herself as a spectator in the presence of other spectators and actors, who share the same dreams, fears, and moral dilemmas. In his essay "Theatre Space: Postulates," Braun laments this lack of a sense of mutual participation: "And how seldom do spectators meet in the theatre."[21] His theory of a theatre of space provided him with an authentic philosophical foundation, a plan of action, and a method of creative work through which he might realize his vision of a true "theatre of the community." And his gradually evolving principle of a "realistico-poetic" theatre enabled him finally to merge into a single theatrical vision the traditional theatre of mise-en-scène, to which he remained dedicated throughout his artistic life in Poland, and the communal theatre movement of the sixties and seventies, which began to change the face of theatre, not only in Poland but around the world, and which Braun adapted to transform his own theatre work.

The question immediately arises, and has been asked by a number of theatre critics in Poland, whether this attempt by Braun to merge these two antagonistic trends in postwar

theatre--the "royal road" of the theatre of spectacle and mise-en-scène and the "hard road" of the ritual/communal theatre--might involve him in an inherent contradiction, not only of methods but of intentions. There is a temptation to view Braun's work in the theatre as a shrewd (and safe) middle-of-the-road career that allowed him the luxury and security of a well-subsidized and splendidly equipped national theatre while he dabbled, at the same time, in the fashionably daring new theatre of Brook, Grotowski, Chaikin, Schechner, and others.

It might appear that Braun craftily navigated a course throughout his career between complete capitulation to party privilege (and party control), and brave allegiance to the rigorously uncompromising and personally hazardous "hard road" of artistic exploration taken by men such as Grotowski and Kantor. It has even been suggested that Braun raided the radical camps for the sake of an ersatz contemporaneity, in order to do the new for the sake of being "new." During a personal interview at Jagiellonian University in Kraków, Emil Orżechowski, a scholar of modern Polish and world theatre, offered the pointed observation that "everything which is new is known to Braun."[22] Following this logic, one could ultimately argue that Braun's career was not a long, steady progress, but a series of brilliantly self-promotional theatrical events in which he paraded out the latest in radically chic techniques to embellish his image

as a new, rising star in the Polish theatrical firmament during the 1970s.

This harshest of judgments of Braun can be immediately countered by the simple fact that, however skillfully he managed to navigate his career for over twenty years in the theatre in Poland, in 1983 he steered it toward imminent disaster with his production of The Plague. I also believe it can be demonstrated that his work over nearly twenty-five years in the professional theatre was not a series of brash or flamboyant "events," but a steady progress that culminated in his "moment" in Wrocław at the height of Martial Law.

Braun did attempt to marry two highly disparate and even contradictory theatrical traditions, one old and one defiantly new. He tried to create a new form of theatre, but he did so in order to answer the call of his times and the needs of his audience. He was ambitious to change the theatre, but that ambition clearly manifested itself at the very start of his career, and his dissatisfaction with traditional Polish and western theatre practice is apparent in his earliest productions. His creative restlessness and need to test new ideas and theatrical possibilities assert themselves continually throughout his career, particularly in his ongoing collaboration with the most determinedly iconoclastic playwright of postwar Poland, Tadeusz Różewicz. That collaboration began with the world premiere of Różewicz's Interrupted Act in 1970 in Lublin, and ended in

1984 with the Polish premiere of The Trap at Współczesny Theatre. During his professional career in Poland, Braun directed fifteen stage and television productions of seven Różewicz plays, both in Poland and in Western Europe and America. It was in the script of The Interrupted Act that Braun discovered the term "realistico-poetic" theatre, and thereafter began to apply it to his own work. A large and significant part of this dissertation will necessarily deal with Braun's long and close collaboration with Różewicz.

Braun's work in the theatre in Poland reached its peak of popular and critical success during his years at Współczesny Theatre, and culminated in his acclaimed production of The Plague in 1983. A year later he was dismissed from his post as Artistic Director, and a year after that he flew to America to begin a new life and career as a director, teacher, and critic. The following pages are not intended as a polemic on behalf of Kazimierz Braun, his work in the theatre, or his ideas. They do not need one. These pages are intended as a careful and accurate assessment of Braun's place in the recent history of Polish theatre and Polish national life. To do so it will be necessary to provide a context for evaluating his work, not only within the theatre of his times, but within the larger realm of political struggles, historical crises, and social upheavals. Braun lived and created theatre during extraordinary times, and he tried to create it so as to meet and accept the challenge

they offered him. His "moment", however naive or reckless, was nevertheless destined.

The following chapter is intended as a kind of blueprint of that destiny, and as a demonstration of how politics, history, and society shaped its course and moved Braun to choose it, regardless of the consequences to his career, or to his life. The above pages have necessarily encapsulated and condensed a vision of theatre that took Braun many years to evolve. There are many aspects and particular applications of his "realistico-poetic" theatre which will be discussed as they manifest themselves in his work. In particular, Braun came to see these two elements of his theatre--reality and poetry--not only as sharply juxtaposed, but as constantly interpenetrating and causing, as I have termed it, a kind of "chemical reaction" in the audience's consciousness. How Braun set up this reaction in original ways will be investigated in succeeding chapters.

CHAPTER II:

KAZIMIERZ BRAUN'S THEATRE WORK: AN HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

In order to locate and fairly assess Kazimierz Braun's place in contemporary Polish theatre, it is essential to understand that not only he, but Polish theatre and Polish society were undergoing a period of profound change in the mid- and late 1970s. It was a time of political crisis, national self-examination, and gathering historical momentum. After 1980 things would not be the same again, and one had to search for bold ideas, fresh solutions, and new strength to hold the nation together and give it direction. The professional theatre, as much as any national institution in Poland, needed to examine its conscience and rejuvenate its ethos because, according to Emil Orżechowski, a "vacuum" existed in the Polish theatre in the late 1970s.[1]

It was a vacuum that had begun to grow, however, several years earlier when the professional theatre and the Communist Party found themselves to be strange but quite comfortable bedfellows. Jerzy Tymicki (a pseudonym), a professional stage director and Solidarity activist, published a searing indictment of the Polish theatre establishment in the Fall 1986 issue of The Drama Review. He openly indicts many prominent directors for sharing "the same contempt (as the Party) for ordinary people, the same lust for power, the same greed for position, goods, and money." The effect of this cynical, mutual back-scratching described by Tymicki was that by the late seventies, "the traditional, large and attentive theatre public began to turn its back on that theatre which abandoned the social and political reality of its own country. The public abandoned a theatre which disconnected itself from the life of the Polish people."[2] The theatre had forsaken its mandate.

Tymicki does acknowledge the inspiring and committed work being done by men such as Jerzy Grotowski and Tadeusz Kantor, but he argues that the theatre they created was too esoteric and uncompromisingly personal to address the much wider problems of political and social life faced by the majority of Poles in the seventies. Indeed, Grotowski had withdrawn from the theatre in the 1970s to pursue his "paratheatrical" experiments in the forests and mountains of Poland. Ironically, it was precisely the apolitical spirit

of their work that enabled them to be safely exported to the West and even, unconsciously, to be used by the authorities to put a "human face" on the totalitarian regime in Poland.

Growing international exposure and wide acclaim of the Polish theatre further distorted its public image as a free and healthy institution. The celebration culminated in 1975 with the Festival of the Theatre of Nations which was held that year in Poland. Theatre artists from around the world including Jean Louis Barrault, Joseph Chaikin, and Peter Brook came to pay homage to the Polish theatre. Poland, according to Tymicki, "became a regular member of the artistic world community." Polish directors and actors were embraced by their colleagues from around the world. All was well, at least from the outside looking in. Poland, it appeared to the world, was fostering and even financially supporting the most exciting and forward-looking theatre work being done anywhere in the world in recent years. Inside Poland, however, reality was beginning to crack apart, and would soon leave the theatre without a devoted constituency. People were beginning to find the real theatre in the streets, and the whole country would soon become the stage of history upon which millions of Poles would act out their collective destiny.

Tymicki's article, which is unrestrained in its condemnation of establishment theatre and unequivocal in its accusations of specific directors and theatre companies, is

precisely the kind of severe critical judgment I specified in the Introduction to this study. It drew immediate fire. Halina Filipowicz, a scholar of Polish theatre and drama and a native Pole, wrote an angry letter of response to The Drama Review and challenged Tymicki's contention that to be truly politicized, a theatre would have to have taken, if not a directly oppositional at least a strongly non-collaborative stand in relationship to the regime in the late seventies. In particular, Filipowicz counters Tymicki's argument that the work of Grotowski was too apolitical and esoteric to be of any value as a voice of the people. She contends rather that in the context of the growing polarization of social life in Poland in the 1970s, "its deep political resonances become evident."[3] Grotowski was, in effect, trying to create, not a theatre but a society apart through his para-theatrical activity, according to Filipowicz.

The debate between Filipowicz and Tymicki did not end in the pages of The Drama Review. Indeed, the controversy spread as many people both in Poland and the U.S. began to suspect that the author of the "New Dignity" article may have, in fact, been Kazimierz Braun himself. The article certainly speaks very highly of several productions that Braun directed in the seventies and eighties in Poland, and it contains several photographs of his most important work. The most damaging accusation came from Robert Massa in a

July 14, 1987, article in The Village Voice in which the author connected Braun directly to the pseudonym of Jerzy Tymicki.

The epochal changes in Poland's political life in 1990 have rendered the need for secrecy, mystification, and anonymity obsolete. And one of the mysteries to have been solved is that Kazimierz Braun and Jerzy Tymicki are, indeed, one and the same person. Although the mystery is solved, many questions remain unanswered, in particular the reason why so prestigious a journal as TDR would perpetrate a hoax whose purpose seemed more to enhance the drama of an "underground" article than to protect anyone from political reprisals. Many respected theatre people in Poland were deeply angered by the article's strident polemical tone and sweeping judgments. It should be said that the "New Dignity" article did not express any artistic opinions with which other artists and critics did not strongly agree, and certainly this controversy over both the content and the source of the article has not generated any more polemical passion than other similar debates on the moral credentials of those who claim to speak on Poland's behalf.

What is finally most telling about the controversy swirling around the "New Dignity" article is that the theatre in Poland stirs deep emotions and provokes strong responses in people, especially at those times when people's freedom and dignity are threatened. Writers, artists, and

intellectuals hotly debate the purity and authenticity of one another's moral and political credentials, and that debate becomes especially heated when the ethical lines of battle are drawn as clearly as they were during Martial Law. This ongoing debate serves to demonstrate that it is impossible to separate ethics and aesthetics when talking about the theatre in Poland. The political situation in Poland did indeed become very unsettled during the late seventies, and the relationship between the Party and the professional theatre likewise became exceedingly murky. But regardless of how individual directors or theatre companies managed to maneuver around the authorities in order to protect their own moral and creative identities, it is clear that in the 1970s the chasm began to widen between the regime and the nation which would force people to make difficult choices and to take sides. Few would be able to remain neutral or uncommitted.

The first seismic tremor to register in this ostensibly stable society, symbolized by the convening international theatre brotherhood in 1975, came in the political sphere. The summer of 1976 saw the catastrophic debacle of the Gierek regime. Edward Gierek had come to power in 1971 and immediately placed Poland's economy on a doomed course of massive foreign investment and forced industrial productivity. In the early seventies, this program lulled people into a state of complacency with the temporary security of

state-enforced low prices and inflated wages. The failure of Polish products to compete in the world market sent Gierek's program careening toward disaster. In June 1976 the government drastically increased meat prices. An enraged population organized nationwide strikes similar to the Baltic riots in 1970, and to the marches in Poznań in 1956 when fifty-three workers were killed by police. The strikes of 1976 were the first clamorous harbinger of 1980.

The most immediate and irreversible effect of the riots of 1976 was the country's shocked realization that an enormous gulf had grown up in a few short years to divide the wealthy and corrupt political bureaucracy, called the "Red Bourgeoisie,"[4] from the workers, who suffered most severely from their reduced economic status. The workers had been slowly gaining momentum as a political force in the early seventies, and their outrage at the gulf that still existed between them and the ruling elite served to galvanize them as a united force. Other members of the growing opposition who were the natural enemies of the regime--students, writers, artists, members of the intelligentsia--began to marshal their forces as well, although suspicion and factionalism kept their activity in some disarray.

But these forces slowly began to coalesce as the decade moved on. Although the workers still distrusted the members of the intelligentsia as "intellectual masturbators,"[5] the formation of the Committee for the Defense of the Workers

(known as KOR) in 1976 under the leadership of activist-intellectuals such as Jacek Kuroń and Adam Michnik eventually gave valuable guidance and active support to Solidarity in 1980. The number of samizdat, or underground, publications rapidly increased, and many cities started up "Flying Universities" which held classes in the secrecy of private homes. The universities often possessed full faculties and issued diplomas at the end of students' studies. Clearly, things had begun to boil beneath the calm surface of totalitarian control. The regime began to broaden censorship, step up harassment, and increase the imprisonment of dissidents in order to preserve the death mask of stability.

Actually the response of the people to the tactics of the regime was less aggressive opposition than proud indifference. The political and spiritual bridge built by KOR to unite the intellectuals and the workers, who had for decades been divided by suspicion and resentment, and the existence of samizdat publications and "Flying Universities" were only the most dramatic manifestations of an unprecedented, nationwide reorganization of Polish society. It amounted to a complete redefinition of the very idea of community in Poland, and in order to assess Braun's vision of theatre it is essential to understand the degree to which this new idea of community transformed the Polish people and united them against the regime.

Simply, the Polish people began to define themselves in the late seventies as a society (społeczeństwo) completely divorced from the power (władza) of the regime, not in opposition but rather oblivious to it. Poles were attempting to "reconstruct society, to restore social bonds outside official institutions," to quote Adam Michnik, one of the most eloquent articulators of this new ethos of community which would culminate in the rise of Solidarity.[6] Poles were attempting to create a nation within the nation, independent of its power and concerned only with the day-to-day struggle of the people for dignity, happiness, and hope.

This radical redefinition of community had a profound effect on the traditional notion of political and social action in Poland in the late seventies. In the first place Poles rejected the idea of grand heroic gestures of defiance and concentrated instead on small but essential actions performed every day by ordinary people to help make life more secure and dignified for their community. A direct result of this scaling down of political and social action was the rejection of a destructive political Manicheanism that divided the nation into "good" souls and "evil" souls, of "us against them." Instead, each person had to face the challenge and choice each day of what could and should be done. The value of a particular action or gesture was not measured on a grand scale of millennial heroism, but by the simple test of whether it was the right thing to do. People

made great sacrifices, but for real, if small, results. No act could assure either glory or salvation, and each day the choice to act had to be made anew. Success could only be measured by what existed, what was achieved, day-to-day.

It is difficult to comprehend the expansiveness and vitality of this counter-culture that created a nation within the nation, independent of its power and indifferent to its attempts at repression. This community was essentially a wide network of grass-roots social activism that committed itself, not to the seizure of power or overthrow of the regime but to the daily ministering to the needs of the people. It was this ethics of daily activism that made The Plague such an eloquent symbol of the relationship between the regime and the Polish people. The plague simply existed in its horror, but it would be futile and foolish to try and "cure" it. One fought the plague because it was the right and logical thing to do, but one could only fight it by keeping it from infecting others or even oneself. The plague is hopelessness, despair, habit, indifference. Everyone carries the plague, and it is a daily struggle to maintain the courage and hope not to spread the infection. Braun maintains that he did not intend The Plague as an assault on the regime, but as a simple gesture of faith and hope in a time of limited but necessary heroism.

This reorganization of Polish society in the late seventies made not only the regime but the establishment

theatre an irrelevancy, primarily because it could not scale itself down or mobilize itself quickly to reach directly into this new community and meet the people face-to-face. The establishment theatre was spiritually and physically imprisoned in its own mansions of art. To reach the people, theatre would require not only a more accessible space but a more accessible vocabulary, a simple and eloquent language of the community.

The most clear and forceful voices in the theatre that lent themselves to the communal life of the people came from the student theatre organizations. It should be understood that these student theatres are not like those affiliated with university departments in America or western Europe, but are amateur artistic organizations whose experimental and socially committed theatre work carries enormous prestige in Poland. These organizations are essentially clubs that are funded by the universities (which are funded by the authorities). Because of their amateur status, they have been relatively free of the intrusion of censorship, and have most often taken a vigorously anti-traditional approach to performance. Several of these theatres would eventually be granted professional status. The student theatres grew up in the political turbulence of the 1950s that was spawned by the thaw in 1956. During those years of liberalization and relaxed censorship, a new generation of students and young members of the <u>intelligentsia</u> were coming of age and

expressing their restlessness, discontent, and political sophistication through the theatre.

This theatre, by its very nature as a voice of dissent, often took the form of political cabaret, satirical revues, and open street performances. Their style was often highly improvisational and used the popular forms of burlesque and commedia clowning. The most accomplished and successful of the student theatres was Bim-Bom and its offshoot the Afanasjeff Family Circus, which was founded in Gdańsk, not by theatre students but by students of Fine Arts and Architecture. Inspired by avant-garde techniques in painting, cinema, and the cabaret rather than the traditional theatre, these theatres spread their influence in Polish culture and politics throughout the sixties. In 1967, the International Festival of Student Theatres was founded in Wrocław. Student theatres had become a serious force in Polish culture, and would begin to exert even greater influence on events during the seventies.

Certain events caused the student theatre movement to reassess its unique relationship to Polish society in the early seventies. According to Edward Chudwinski in his article "Towards the Open Theatre," the worldwide student protest marches in 1968 and the hopeful change of government in Poland in December 1970 caused the student theatre movement to shift its agenda away from more avant-garde experiments in the aesthetics of theatre and toward a much greater

concern with social ethics and with participating more directly in the everyday struggles of the people in Poland.[7] The primary question for these theatres became less what kind of theatre we should make, than what kind of people we should be and what kind of life we should attempt to live. Acknowledging this trend and supporting it, the organizers of the festival in Wrocław changed its name to the Festival of Open Theatre in 1973.

Much of the discussion during the festival that year centered on the precise meaning of "openness." Although each theatre group participating in the festival had its own definition of the term, all of the groups shared a deep sense of obligation to fulfill a role as a socio-political force in Polish society. Bugosław Litwiniec, the founder and Artistic Director of the Kalambur theatre, one of the earliest and most successful student theatres, published twenty-one "convictions" on the subject of "openness." Litwiniec maintained that "open art chooses ethical over an aesthetic attitude, beauty is treated as justice and good. . . . Open art treats itself as a way of participating in life, in the conviction that to create differently is to live differently."[8] Unlike the alternative or counter-culture theatre in America and in much of Europe, the student theatre movement in Poland has always been much more directly involved in contemporary life and social issues, and has continued to carry on a lively debate with the

cultural and political mainstream. The prestige that these theatres have earned is testified to by the fact that many were granted professional status in the seventies, including Kalambur, Theatre of the Eighth Day (which went underground in 1986), Teatr Stu and STS in Kraków, and Teatr 77 in Łódź. The reason, of course, that the government granted professional status to these student theatres was that they could then be more effectively controlled. It was a tacit acknowledgement by the government that these theatres were becoming dangerously influential. The great force that they exerted on contemporary social life in Poland would also radically influence Kazimierz Braun's own work in the seventies.

If the student theatres seemed to be rushing in to fill the vacuum created by the artistically indolent and complacent official theatre, it must be said that that theatre was at least becoming aware of the widening gulf that existed between it and the public, especially the workers. And it did make attempts, however inadequate, to respond to the needs of the public whose lives were being disrupted by an increasingly unstable economic situation, political struggles with the authorities, and a highly uncertain future. In his 1977 article "Polish Theatre Closer to Contemporary Life," Roman Szydłowski discusses the suspicion with which the workers traditionally viewed the official national theatre, primarily because they felt uncomfortable with its

atmosphere of fashionable society, were bored and confused by the choice of plays (especially classics), and were indifferent to its lofty intellectual and poetic aspirations. Films seemed to the workers to be much more immediate and accessible.[9]

For a number of years the official theatre, according to Mr. Szydłowski, had been discussing ways to make itself more accessible to the people, and in the early 1970s a program was instituted to set up decentralized theatres in individual housing districts. The best known of these new theatres, Teatr Na Woli, was established in the working-class Wola district of Warsaw in 1976, and the outstanding director and popular actor, Tadeusz Łomnicki, was named Artistic Director. Its artistic program intended to address the immediate concerns of the workers' lives and their families, and also to provide amusement and relaxing entertainment for everyone living in the district. One of the innovations at Teatr Na Woli was its invitation to the audience, in the form of postcards placed around the foyer, to offer their comments and thoughts on each performance in order to promote a more active dialogue between the theatre and its audience.[10] In its organization and artistic policy it resembled in many ways Roger Planchon's Théâtre de la Cité de Villeurbanne set up by the French government in that working class suburb.

More important than inviting the workers to participate more directly in the life of the theatre was selecting an appropriate repertoire to attract and hold this new audience. The later seventies saw fewer classics and many more contemporary plays being produced on Polish stages and written by Polish authors. Plays also dealt more directly and uninhibitedly with the problems of labor-management relations and with the ethics of political life in the Party. In its first year of operation, Teatr Na Woli produced The Minutes of the Conference by a Soviet author Alexander Gelman, which dealt with the mismanagement and moral posturing of the leaders of a labor organization. The production portrayed people exactly like those sitting in the audience, and spoke in their own common language. It examined a serious moral problem that directly affected the lives of that same audience. It criticized the actions of bureaucrats with whom that audience had to deal every day. Many theatres in Gdańsk, Toruń, Łódź, and other industrial cities produced plays that addressed similar ethical problems and political issues set in working-class environments. Theatres also set up play competitions and evenings of staged-readings of plays that invited audience response in order to encourage new writing and give young playwrights a chance to be heard.

Well-established and successful playwrights who had made international reputations in the sixties writing in the

tradition of the theatre of the absurd were also beginning to write plays in a more direct, critical, and intellectually unaffected style. Sławomir Mrożek, the most sophisticated writer of "Aesopian" fables and "parables of power" in the sixties, wrote The Emigrés in 1975,[11] which was produced by a number of official theatres in Poland. The play deals in a sharply satiric and often bitter language with an immediate and inescapable problem in Polish life: the gulf of misunderstanding that still separated (in 1975) the intellectuals and the workers. Drawing directly on his own experience as an emigre intellectual, Mrożek mocks the self-absorbed posturing and convoluted philosophical ramblings of the writer/intellectual who is unable to produce any work of real political or social commitment. The character, AA, invents an elaborate system of thought to justify his own impotence. He prefers to ridicule his worker roommate, XX, who is more interested in his baser physical and emotional needs. This often hilarious two-character play ends with the worker snoring on his cot, while the intellectual sobs helplessly in the darkness across the room. Even Tadeusz Różewicz, the most uncompromising innovator in Polish theatre in the sixties and early seventies, began to turn toward more universal and less specifically political crises of life. His play, White Marriage, written in 1975, is set in a historically removed, late-nineteenth century bourgeois family milieu. It deals in explicit language and shocking

images with the sexual awakening of a frightened young woman and with the shameful secrets of both parents and children.

Poland was by no means alone in this quest to recover a sense of being grounded in the immediate concerns of daily life, or to create a theatre that would genuinely serve the needs of the community. Perhaps because the whole renaissance in postwar theatre practice that had begun with Beckett and Genet and continued through the wild experimentalism of the sixties had now begun to lose steam, the theatre worldwide began in the seventies to seek a simpler, more direct, and more equal partnership with its audience. The world seemed to be getting smaller and less stable, and perhaps the adolescence of the sixties was passing into the maturity of the seventies. Companies like Mnouchkine's Théâtre du Soleil and Planchon's in the city of Villeurbanne, Brook's International Center for Theatre Research, and Richard Schechner's investigation of the anthropological structures of primitive theatre were attempting to uncover the indigenous roots of culture through the theatre and to use the theatre to reaffirm those cultural bonds of the community.

Theatre began to incorporate popular performance forms such as the circus, cabaret, fairs, parades, and sacred festivals, and to find its inspiration in the common fund of culture, myth, history, and ceremony that a community draws on to sustain its spiritual life. Ironically, it was the

same Theatre of Nations Festival in Warsaw which had acclaimed the glory of Polish theatre in 1975 that set forth an agenda for the creation of a theatre that would meet the demands of the coming times. In his article "New Trends in Contemporary Theatre," which gives a detailed account of the proceedings of the Festival, Roman Szydłowski sums up the major issues:

> But the general tenor was that there was a need for a social theatre involved in the affairs of its time, for a political theatre that would differ from the political theatre of the sixties, . . . a theatre of truth about the contemporary world and its problems.[12]

In the same speech in which he called for a choice between the "royal" and the "hard" road for the new theatre, Jean Darcante stated emphatically where the future lies for the theatre of the seventies and eighties, "in relations between the actors and the spectators. A search must be made for something else, for something new. I don't know what this newness can come to, but I believe that it is heading toward establishing a new relation between the public and the theatre."[13] Throughout the world the seventies were becoming the decade of the audience, and it was to this audience that Braun would try to bring his theatre.

But despite the genuine efforts of international festivals in Poland, the official theatres, both new and well-established playwrights, and the student theatres, all of whom tried to bring the theatre and its audience closer

together in mutual recognition, a "vacuum" still existed in the theatre in Poland in the late seventies. According to Professor Orzechowski, this was due primarily to the absence of an exciting new generation of theatre directors who could carry on the work of the previous generation that had seized the bold opportunities offered to Polish theatre following the thaw.[14] That generation had achieved its maturity thanks to the revitalization of the romantic repertoire on Polish stages and the rediscovery of the native genius of Witold Gombrowicz and Stanisław Ignacy Witkiewicz. But the creative vitality was waning.

In 1976, Konrad Swinarski, universally acknowledged as the outstanding director of his generation, was tragically killed in an airplane crash. His staging of Forefathers' Eve two years earlier had been a landmark production in the history of Polish theatre. His colleague at the Stary Theatre in Kraków, Jerzy Jarocki, primarily because of declining health, directed fewer productions in the later seventies. He had been especially esteemed as an accomplished interpreter of the contemporary repertoire of American and European, as well as Polish, drama. In the sixties, he had become known as one of the foremost theatrical translators of the plays of Tadeusz Różewicz. Andrzej Wajda, who along with Swinarski and Jarocki had made the Stary Theatre the preeminent example of a true "national" theatre, continued to do most of his directorial work in film.

Although they and other directors continued to produce important work in the theatre, the sense that a living, tradition of directing could be passed to the next generation was fading, particularly after the heady spirit of the sixties. Audiences filled the student theatres, and the theatres in cabarets and coffee houses were more accessible and meaningful. Because of deepening political tensions censorship was heavy, and the whole debate on new directions for the theatre in Poland had virtually ceased to exist, according to Professor Orżechowski.[15] Braun's success as the Artistic Director of two important official theatres, his innovative productions of the plays of Różewicz, and his growing reputation as an articulate and forward-thinking theorist of the new open theatre made him by 1975 a likely candidate to help fill this vacuum in the Polish national theatre. In those initial years as head of Współczesny Theatre in Wrocław, Braun worked both to fulfill a sense of urgent opportunity in his own artistic mission and to lay the foundations for a theatre that could assume the burden of destiny in the years to come.

Not only the ten years he spent in Wrocław, but Braun's entire life's work must be seen as the product of a unique historical moment. This is more true in Poland than perhaps anywhere else, because history in Poland does not unfold in a progressive sequence of events, but rather erupts in

periodic bursts of war, revolt, sudden changes of government, and the continuous clenching and unclenching of the fist of totalitarian authority. Poland has produced what might be called a "catastrophist" school of history. The generations radically redefine themselves every ten years or so, and someone born five years before or after someone else lives in a different world. Born in 1936, Braun was old enough to be deeply affected by the war (his father was imprisoned in 1948 for anti-communist activity and lost his job as a lawyer), but not old enough to serve in the army or become a member of the Resistance. His family, living in a small town deep in the middle of the country, managed to escape the trauma of bloodshed, relocation, or the camps. His imagination was not seared by the memory of war and the holocaust, as was that of slightly older men like Kantor, Szajna, and his mentor, Bohdan Korzeniewski, the Dean of the Drama School in Warsaw when Braun was a student there.

Braun is approximately the same age as Grotowski, and they are both members of that generation of the fifties who reacted to postwar life and the ensuing political upheavals with youthful anxiousness, intellectual restiveness, and a fiery spirit of dissent. Their introduction to the theatre came at a time of growing opportunities and expanding possibilities. Braun trained at the Drama School shortly after the thaw of 1956, which ushered in the renaissance of experimentation. Polish theatre embraced the theatre of the

the West--Beckett and Ionesco from France, Brecht from Germany, and Frisch and Dürrenmatt from Switzerland. The spirit of the times was restless, independent, and adventurous. The theatre shook off the constraints of a stifling socialist-realism. Influence from the West gave inspiration to native playwriting and helped launch the careers of Mrożek and Różewicz. Braun's first professional assignment was to direct three Mrożek one-acts, Charlie, Striptease, and Out At Sea, in which characters are caught in absurd situations of personal assault and exposure. These early Mrożek plays dissect the slavish mindset of people living under authoritarian rule. It was an auspicious time for Mrożek, for Braun, and for Polish theatre.

Braun's personal and artistic milieu was shaped by the political turbulence of the fifties. The theatre world that he entered in 1961 as a director was aggressively innovative and exploratory. But the native tradition of directing that he inherited, and into which he was initiated at the Drama School, was half a century old. The tradition of stage direction as it was handed down to Braun begins at the turn of the century with the great director Leon Schiller. Schiller's approach to directing, as I have pointed out, was founded on a formalist principle of stage spectacle or mise-en-scène, and the totally integrated and unified theatrical production concept. Schiller's vision of theatre, as taught

by the Drama School, placed the overwhelming artistic responsibility on the director to envision, orchestrate, and supervise the realization of the spectacle on the stage. He was not interested in spectacle for its own sake, but as an expression of great national literature which would become the expression of a great national culture. Schiller also rediscovered the popular pre-Renaissance folk traditions of Polish theatre, and reinvigorated the idea of theatre as festival or community celebration. He staged a number of medieval folk plays outdoors in small villages in Poland during the twenties and thirties.

It was Braun's early ambition to work in this tradition inherited from Schiller. Immediately following his training at the Drama School, he embarked on a career as a director in the wide network of official state theatres in Poland. It might seem that glory already clings to the recent graduates of the Drama School, which was the only program of study for directors at that time and to which only five students were admitted each year. But in fact, the early stages of a professional career in Poland were in those years quite hazardous financially. Despite, or perhaps because of, state subsidy, the salaries for directors, especially for those just starting out, were abysmally small. Most often jobs had to be accepted at small provincial theatres that could not afford to pay more prestigious directors. Obviously, a beginning director could not work

in the more reputable theatres in the largest cities. In many ways the situation was identical to the risks young professionals have always faced in the United States. Of course, in Poland today the professional risks are greater than ever.

Braun was very young, only twenty-six, when he began his career, and two years later he married. Soon he and his wife, Zofia, had their first child. Consequently, Braun took on as much work as he could and traveled widely to prove himself and to support his family. He directed productions in Warsaw, Gdańsk, Łódź, and Toruń. He often undertook assignments during these initial years for which he had little enthusiasm because they were what particular theatres demanded. But this wide-ranging work for a number of theatres throughout Poland did enable him to demonstrate his skill in the full repertoire of Polish, European, and even American plays. He directed both classic authors such as Moliere and Shakespeare, as well as contemporary writers such as Pirandello, Brecht, Dürrenmatt, John Osborne, and Arthur Miller. He directed the Polish premieres of Tonight We Improvise (which he translated) and Osborne's Inadmissable Evidence. A few years later he would direct the Polish premiere of Miller's All My Sons at the Osterwa Theatre in Lublin. From the beginning of his professional career, Braun absorbed the spirit of these contemporary plays, both through their theatrical inventiveness and

through their concern with the problems of personal conscience and social responsibility.

Braun steeped himself in the tradition of romantic drama as well. The sixties saw the revitalization of the Polish national drama on Polish stages, and the plays of Mickiewicz, Słowacki, Krasiński, and Wyspiański were discovered suddenly to possess an extraordinary timeliness. The sixties and early seventies marked the high point of Polish theatre productions of the classics. Braun was still a young director when he undertook to stage some of these densely poetic, multi-dimensional epics. He staged Wyspiański's The Wedding when he was only four years out of Drama School, and won his third "Best Director" award for that production at the Theatre Festival in Toruń. The play presents enormous technical and interpretive problems for a director, combining as it does elements of biography, history, legend, contemporary Polish life, and dream sequences. His success with this play's intricate weaving of Polish history and millennial dreaming demonstrates not only his wide ambition, but also the early maturity of his directorial vision and his determination to work and succeed in the honored tradition of Poland's national theatre. He also directed Wyspiański's November Night and Słowacki's Fantazy, both of which require a keen intellectual understanding of the eternal crises of Polish history, when he was still

younger than many directors in Poland who attempt to stage these difficult works.

But it was the Polish romantic poet and playwright Cyprian Norwid with whom Braun felt the deepest affinity and closest intellectual sympathy. Although Braun's life-long relationship with the works of Norwid will be discussed more fully in the next chapters, it is crucial to point out in this overview of his work the extent to which Norwid's lonely devotion to the sacred purpose of poetry and theatre affected Braun, even before he had begun his theatre training in 1958. (In fact it was Braun's bold interpretation of Norwid's play In the Wings, presented in a dramaturgical study as a requirement for acceptance to the Drama School in Warsaw, that gained him admittance.)

Norwid was largely unappreciated in his own time, in large part because he broke sharply with other romantic poets, in particular Mickiewicz himself, through his complete rejection of the ideal of violent revolutionary action as a means of restoring national independence. Although he shared with the romantic poets a deep faith that the beauty of poetry and the love of the common folk could rejuvenate the nation, he rejected the reckless histrionics of heroic insurrections and bloody revolt. His personal view of liberty and creativity was profoundly spiritual, and deeply influenced by his faith in the example of Christ. He had undergone a mystical revelation about the redemptive power

of Christ's teaching and mission when he visited Mickiewicz in Rome in 1848. Although he was devoted to the cherished romantic ideal of a restored community, he refused to believe that it could be won by force.

Instead, he placed his faith in the gradual spread and persistent growth of human values and identified creativity with the potential to be fully human. The bulk of his creative work was produced in the second half of the nineteenth century, and he was especially concerned with the encroachment of industrialism and commercialism on social life and personal integrity. Norwid might even be called a kind of proto-modernist, particularly in his sharp juxtaposition of a strong romantic atmosphere and aesthetic sensibility with the crude particulars of contemporary life. Traditional critics found him to be willfully obscure in his poetic images which combined Polish archaisms, a nineteenth century vocabulary of philosophy and science, and the contemporary jargon of the streets, salons, and factories. He might effectively be compared to T. S. Eliot.[16] Braun identified with Norwid and staged him, not as the fourth national bard but as a twentieth-century modernist poet, who combined the very old romantic spirit of art as a higher truth with the minutiae of everyday life. To quote Braun, "Norwid's dramatic creativity oscillates . . . between two poles and always unites two elements: the realistic concrete and great poetic generalization."[17] In Norwid's

poetry Braun found an aesthetic principle at work which could be applied to his own vision of a "realistico-poetic" theatre. It is this same principle of collage and sharp juxtaposition that Braun would continue to find so compelling in the plays of Różewicz.

Braun also greatly admires in Norwid's plays, as he does in Różewicz's, the lively and subversive playing with the artifice of the theatre. In his major plays, The Actor, In the Wings, and The Ring of the Great Lady, Norwid blatantly exposes the inherent theatricality of contemporary society, with its flagrant self-consciousness and image worship. He employs either the world of the theatre itself or the device of conscious role-playing as a means of self-protection to examine the tragic quest for personal authenticity in the cynical teatrum mundi of contemporary life. Beginning with his dramaturgical analysis of In the Wings in 1958, and continuing through his productions of The Actor in 1965 and In the Wings in 1970 (which realized on stage his original conception of the play), Braun manifested in his work with Norwid his early dissatisfaction with traditional illusionistic theatre and his attempts to undermine it. This first decade of Braun's career has been characterized as pervaded by the self-critical spirit of "theatre within the theatre location,"[18] which also reveals his early fascination with the theatre of Pirandello and Brecht. In the Wings, written in 1865, uses the self-reflexive theatrical

convention of a play-within-a-play to expose the jaded views of a self-absorbed society which, because of its appetite for slick boulevard comedies, cannot recognize a true work of art. In the Wings is set in an actual Warsaw theatre, and the play, which has been written by a dedicated poet, is performed on the stage and judged by the fashionable elite of Warsaw, who deride its profound poetic truth. In his dramaturgical analysis, Braun uses Brechtian alienation techniques by having the actors of the performed play stand apart from their roles and comment on the on-stage action, often making ironic comments about the playwright's efforts, and even offering suggestions on how a scene might be played. The play-within-the-play is a kind of moral "Mouse-trap" which catches the false conscience of the society, even though that society is too self-absorbed to recognize its own warped image in the face of simple poetic and spiritual truth.

Without the influence of Norwid, we have a picture of Braun in this early stage of his career as a young, talented, and ambitious director thoroughly steeped in the received tradition, bent on making his way in the official theatre, and anxious to make use of the latest theatrical fashions from the West. But with Norwid, the picture becomes a more complex portrait of a man restless and impatient with the whole tradition of realistic theatre practice which must submit to the tyranny of illusion, and determined

instead to use theatre to fix the conscience of the nation in its own image. Like Norwid, Braun also worked from the very outset of his career to discover a more direct and authentic means of creating a sense of community based on the fundamental Christian belief that each human life has value as part of that community. And like Norwid, Braun went his own way and created a unique stage poetry for his theatre. It is his work with Norwid's plays, as much as anything, that demonstrates the continuity and determined progress of Braun's early career in the theatre, especially in the 1960s.

The plays of Cyprian Norwid helped Braun discover and nurture a creative principle for the reconstruction of his theatre as a medium for social criticism and moral self-examination. But it is the plays of Tadeusz Różewicz that provided him with the raw theatrical material for his "realistico-poetic" theatre, a theatre that would be constructed essentially on the single creative principle of assault. The target of that assault was that final barrier--physical, theatrical, and cultural--that separated the actors from the audience in a performance. Braun's first productions of Różewicz's plays, The Interrupted Act in 1970 (the world premiere) and The Card Index and The Old Woman Broods in 1973, began to make a freely expanded and flexible use of theatre space, both inside and outside the theatre building. In Różewicz, Braun discovered a theatrical poet who was

trying to break apart the autonomous and intact structure of the text and instead place himself (and by extension the audience) in the midst of the experience of the stage action. He surrounds himself with the images, characters, bits of history and biography, and fragments of scenes that constitute his dramas. Różewicz, perhaps more than any other playwright in Poland, relinquishes his control over the theatrical vision of his plays and places it in the hands of the director to create the final mise-en-scène. He also allows, or demands, a large measure of autonomy in his audience, who are placed, just as he is, "inside the events that are taking place right in the very core of the action, and within the structural limits of the performance," as Braun argues in his essay "Tadeusz Różewicz: A Playwright for the Electronic Age."[19] With his production of Birth Rate, Różewicz's theatre text subtitled A Biography of a Play for the Theatre, in 1979, Braun raised the status of the spectator to equal partnership with the playwright and the director.

Birth Rate was not a theatre event but an act of collective creation in which the spectators fully participated as they moved through the rooms and passageways of Współczesny Theatre in a dense theatrical environment of statistical information, scene fragments, and concrete stage poetry.[20] Braun's collaboration with Różewicz lasted

nearly fifteen years and included fifteen stage and television productions, prior to his departure for America. Both Różewicz and Norwid provided Braun with inspiration and a creative methodology to help shape his ideas and construct his productions over years of work in the theatre. These two poets of the theatre helped Braun chart his career as a determined progress toward the fulfillment of his dream for a true community.

Also instrumental in shaping the vision of Braun's theatre were the cities in which he created most of this seminal productions. As the Artistic Director of theatres in Lublin and Wrocław, he came to cities that are large metropolitan centers of culture and that have populations which can support a large national theatre. Both cities also boast centuries-old universities--Catholic University in Lublin and Wrocław University--that thrive as centers of student activism, intellectual ferment, and theatrical experimentation. Both cities contributed greatly to the radical theatre movement that grew out of the intensified student activism of the sixties and seventies. Because of their large populations and vital traditions of learning, Lublin and Wrocław became centers of theatrical innovation and critical debate during the years of Braun's tenure. One of the most adventurous student theatre groups in Lublin during those years was Plastyczna KUL (the Plastic Theatre), founded by a painter and sculptor, Leszek Mądzik. His

theatre discarded language entirely in favor of synthesis of music, light, color, and physical space. Actors did not speak, but moved silently within the spacial environment and achieved complete integration with the technical elements and physical space.

But it was Wrocław that would become the mecca for theatre experimentation and innovation in the 1970s, not only in Poland but from around the world. The city was still strongly identified with the work of Grotowski when Braun arrived in 1975, although Grotowski had already begun to undertake his para-theatrical activities away from the city after 1970. Wroclaw was also the home through the 1970s of one of Poland's most unusual theatres, Henry Tomaszewski's Pantomime Theatre, which sought a synthesis of Polish romantic traditions and nineteenth-century French pantomime. Drawing on the inspiration of great classical literature Tomaszewski created magnificent spectacles using beautiful body movement, elaborate costumes, and technical machinery. He would often confront the most somber themes in classical literature, such as in Hamlet, but then transcend them through the sheer beauty of his spectacles which attained a completely autonomous existence as a work of theatre art. I have already briefly discussed Kalambur theatre, one of the most successful student theatres now turned professional, and the widely influential Festival of Open Theatres, which is still held every other year under

its new name, the International Meeting of Open Theatre and Open Art. The 1975 Theatre of Nations festival placed Wrocław on the world map.

It is significant that while both cities did support official theatres, Braun was invited to work in Lublin and then Wrocław because the theatres in both cities needed to be rejuvenated after a brief period of artistic decline and creative stagnation. He was not intending to use those theatres as a private laboratory of theatrical experiment, but was fulfilling a mandate to revitalize first the Osterwa Theatre, and then eight years later, Współczesny Theatre. And both cities responded enthusiastically to Braun's innovations and bold experimentation. The move from Lublin to Wrocław in 1975 was the culmination of years of work and struggle. A number of people in the theatre world in Wroclaw, including Grotowski himself, Zbigniew Kubikowski, the publisher of the literary and artistic periodical Odra, and several members of the theatre faculty at Wrocław University lobbied to bring Braun to the city. Józef Kelera maintains that Braun's appointment was "one of the few successful personnel decisions in the cultural life of Wrocław in the 1970s."[21] Wrocław and Współczesny Theatre seemed made for Braun.

The theatre lives up to its name "Contemporary." Originally a restaurant which had been turned into a kind of nightclub and brothel by the Nazis during the war, it was

redesigned as a theatre in 1946. With a small auditorium and balcony, it seats only 340 people. The theatre itself is surprisingly small and unadorned, and the stage is only about thirty-five feet wide. It is, however, quite deep with a good fly system. Braun did not find the facilities entirely suitable when he arrived, primarily because of the distance separating the stage and the seating. Consequently in his first year as Artistic Director he had the forestage extended out over the first two rows of seats, which reduced the audience capacity by thirty, and had the entire stage area, including the walls of the theatre up to the front edge of the new forestage, painted black. He had wanted to remove the proscenium arch to create a stripped-down black box, but the arch was connected to main support beams.

The theatre retains to this day the feel of a modern, intimate space, but without sacrificing essential technical capabilities. The architectural design of the theatre building is a model of Marxist functionalism. The lobby and second floor landing present a sober, neutral facade that is decorated in varnished wood paneling. The floors are covered in linoleum tiles that mimic a black and grey veined marble. The overall impression is rigorously institutional, and even suggests the look of a high school lobby and auditorium in the United States in the fifties. The exterior of the theatre is singularly unprepossessing. The architectural design of the entire theatre lives up to its name.[22]

The theatre did not actually receive the name Wspolczesny until the 1960s, when its artistic policy, which flourished under Braun, began to be formed. At that time (the early sixties) the theatre began to attract certain young, talented, and ambitious directors--Zygmunt Hübner, Jerzy Jarocki, and Andrzej Witkowski, and also to identify itself with exciting young playwrights such as Timoteusz Karpowicz and, of course, Tadeusz Różewicz, who lives in Wrocław. Helmut Kajzar, both a very talented director and accomplished playwright, worked continuously with Współczesny from this time until his sudden death in 1983. Różewicz had actually been identified with the theatre before Braun's arrival. In 1969, Jarocki directed the world premiere of The Old Woman Broods which, in its bold ideas and daring theatrical realization, came to epitomize the artistic and intellectual commitment of this "contemporary" theatre.

This spirit of bold theatrical experiment and serious intellectual investigation of contemporary social issues that had been the mark of the theatre in the sixties began to dissipate in the early seventies. When Braun arrived in 1975, he immediately undertook an ambitious program of rejuvenation that included a wide repertoire of classical and contemporary plays, and which had as its motive force Braun's sincere commitment to expand the theatrical and cultural accessibility of the theatre to its audience. His

first production was an expressionistic rendering of Różewicz's White Marriage, followed by major productions of Anna Livia (adapted from James Joyce by the poet Maciej Słomczyński) and Mother Courage in 1976, Gombrowicz's Operetta in 1977, and a monumentally epic staging of Forefathers' Eve in 1978 which was performed in two parts over two days and which employed several locations throughout the city.

In 1979, he took his greatest risk and created an environmental, participatory stage happening out of Różewicz's Birthrate, which is not a play but a record of the author's prolonged meditation on his failure to write a play with a finished form about the problem of the rampant birthrate. The text is part a description of the play as it began to form in his head, part an historical account of the circumstances surrounding the writing of Birthrate, and part a biography of the play itself as it grew almost with a life of its own.[23] Braun's production took the audience into a rehearsal hall, down into the prop warehouse, into the auditorium of the theatre, and up onto the stage to view various stations of the performance. The production was, up to that time, the most fully-realized expression of Braun's vision of a true theatre of the community. The audience recognized itself and its responsibility as participants in the theatrical exploration of the phenomenon of, as Różewicz

called it, "the living, growing mass of mankind" that explodes categorization, suppression, and political control.[24] With this production Braun realized his long-time dream of theatre as a collective act of creation.

During his ten years as Artistic Director of Współczesny Theatre, Kazimierz Braun attempted to take the fruits of a career devoted to theatrical experimentation and the accumulated wisdom of twenty years of thinking and writing about the theatre, and apply them to the on-going work of a major repertory theatre. He took his ideas and methods to the West through tours that traveled to western Europe, Greece, Spain, and the British Isles. These successful tours were also crucial to the growing prestige of the theatre at home as well. It is one of the ironies of Polish theatre criticism that a theatre is often not recognized at home until it has received acclaim abroad. As Współczesny established itself as one of the most adventurous theatres in Poland, Braun continued to write prolifically and publish a number of books on the contemporary theatre of Europe and America. Teaching also contributed an essential component of his growth as a theatre artist. He sat on the theatre faculty of Wrocław University and at the Drama School in Krakow, which had been founded in 1973. He taught acting, directing, and theatre history. He spent his ten years at Współczesny Theatre weaving together the threads of his life as a director, writer, teacher, and thinker to

create a new and unique form of theatre art that would both honor tradition and also evolve to meet the demands of increasingly turbulent and uncertain times. He wanted to discover and nurture, not only a new kind of theatre but a new kind of audience that would make his theatre a central meeting place of the community. His production of The Plague in 1983 came as close to fulfilling that vision as it was possible to come. Summing up his years spent in Wrocław, Anna Witkowska, his Public Relations Director at the theatre, says simply that "it was a sweet time."[25]

It all came to an end in 1984. Braun had found an interesting parallel between the presence of a disease that is spread insidiously through an entire population by small vermin, and certain contemporary realities. Braun still maintains that the production was not intended as an open affront to the regime, but as a much more personal statement about how moral corruption can so easily infect anyone, anywhere, and at any time. Clearly a number of people saw the production in quite another light. He was dismissed from his post on July 5, 1984. With no theatre in which to carry on his work and his ideas, he chose finally to leave Poland in the autumn of 1985 to begin a new life and embark on a new career as a teacher and director in America.

This brief overview has been intended to demonstrate the close interconnection of history, political events, and the life of the theatre in Poland as they acted upon the

mind and imagination of Kazimierz Braun, and as he responded, through his art, to them. It is the central argument of this study of Kazimierz Braun's theatre work that while his career moved through a number of successive stages, those stages were the manifestation of a consistent evolution or "progress" of his art that began to emerge at the very outset of his work in the theatre, and that continued to develop through the incorporation of new ideas and methods. At no time did he reject tradition in favor of the fashionably and facilely new.

The following chapters will attempt to focus on those successive stages of Braun's work in the theatre by examining specific productions and the critical response they generated from his fellow theatre artists--actors, directors, designers--as well as from critics and scholars in Poland and America. Although certain productions that Braun staged prior to moving to Wrocław will be examined, in particular the plays of Różewicz, the core of this dissertation and its argument will be devoted to the years spent at Współczesny Theatre since those years represent the fruition of his ideas about the theatre, specifically his vision of the "theatre of the community." Those years also were a time of great flux, vague foreboding, and rising, if uncertain, expectations. Braun's adoption of many of the more radical techniques of theatre production during the sixties

and seventies--environmental theatre, audience participation, and non-textual performance--was not a daring bid for glory but a genuine attempt to fulfill a need that had begun to grow in the seventies for a more direct and immediate relationship between the theatre and its audience. This need was being acknowledged and addressed by theatre artists and critics, not only in Poland but around the world. Something was definitely in the wind in Poland in the mid and late seventies, and when the storm came Braun tried to make his theatre a spiritual shelter against it.

The following pages are not intended as a polemic in defense of Braun's highly controversial and unorthodox methods of theatre production nor as a platform for expounding his ideas and theories. They are offered as an accurate record of Braun's theatre work in the context of his times and, as far as possible, a careful account of his development as a thinker and theorist of the theatre. Most important, these pages intend to demonstrate the close interconnection between his practical work and his thinking about the theatre. Their mutual influence make up a steady and determined progress toward the ultimate realization of his vision of a theatre of the community.

CHAPTER III: THE THEATRE IS A BUILDING

The man who would one day come to devote his professional life to the making of a theatre that would embrace and serve the members of his community entered that life feeling very much a stranger in their midst. This painful burden of estrangement which impressed itself on Braun's heart and mind as a young man derived initially from political, and only eventually from theatrical, forces operating in Poland after the war. Of course those two forces would become inextricably linked as Braun advanced in his career. And he would have to learn to tolerate, subtly resist, and finally openly combat those forces as he lived his life as a director in Poland. From his years as a young high school student in Częstochowa, in south-central Poland, Braun lived, and felt, as "someone apart."[1] This is not an attempt at psychological reconstruction or analysis, but the simple statement of a cruel and common fact of Polish national life.

Braun's feeling of separateness was the hard consequence of his debased political status, which was early and swiftly enforced by the new regime after the war. That status had been dictated to him when the authorities arrested and imprisoned his father for participating in clandestine activities as a member of the underground opposition. It was of course "normal" to be detained by the Nazis during the war (Braun's father was imprisoned three times). But to be stripped of one's rights and deprived of a livelihood by one's own countrymen in the service of a puppet regime installed by Moscow was a bitter lesson to be learned by an impressionable young man. Many had to learn it. Braun would never forget it.

Braun's father was imprisoned for five years, from 1948 to 1953, during the most difficult and vulnerable years of his son's adolescence. After graduating from high school in 1953 Braun applied for admission to the University of Poznań, but his father's status as a subversive caused his application to be rejected. Without hope of a university education he worked at various menial jobs, one of which was that of apprentice to a bricklayer. A year later he applied once again to the university, but this time he listed his occupation simply as "Worker." He was immediately accepted, and enrolled at the University of Poznań in 1954, a future "Man of Marble."

These early incidents left a deep impression on Braun's spirit that remained with him his entire career as a director in Poland, and helped to shape his vision of the theatre. But they also taught him a hard and valuable lesson about the cruelty, the pervasive reach, and the profound absurdity of the political system in Poland. "Apartness," if it inspired his work and imbued it with deep moral conviction, also supplied Braun with a cagey strategy and tactical subtlety for the creation of his art. Given the early experiences of his life, Braun never joined the Communist Party and refused all invitations to join that came to him at various times during his career. That refusal dictated his status as a director, which can only be described as exceedingly insecure, and forced him very early to acknowledge the lines of battle that separated him from the centers of power.

But if these battle lines have remained clear and unbreachable for over forty years, they have been separated by a large, and largely uncharted, demilitarized zone which allows writers, artists, and intellectuals to move between them, sometimes quite freely and unchallenged, sometimes at great peril. A director, of course, does not have to belong to the Party in order to work within the network of state theatres in Poland. But it is true that a director's destiny is often determined less by the bold choices he makes as an artist or by the reception he is given by his

audience, than by the murky, subterranean manueverings of Party bureaucrats and Ministers of Culture. Under such repressive conditions, the theatre art created by a director in Poland is inevitably bound by ethical, as well as aesthetic, considerations, and must be judged on the eloquence of its moral and political conviction. And so must Braun's work be judged.

But that eloquence need not necessarily be vehement or even conspicuous. It can just as easily and effectively, especially in Poland, be keenly subtle and even sly. It is not the intention of this chapter, and certainly not of this dissertation, to cast Braun in the role of moral hero or political martyr who took a brave stand against a crudely repressive and artistically insensible regime. The inner workings of the Polish government, and the subversive tactics of Braun's theatre, are more ingenious than that. (It must be remembered that the sixties saw the rise of the theatre of "Aesopian allegory" and Mrożek's parables of power.) Braun was devoted to the ideal of a vibrant national theatre, and remained intent on working within that system. As a non-communist director, he was neither an outsider nor an insider. Rather he was an outsider working on the inside for most of his career. But it is essential to understand and appreciate the degree to which his acute perception of himself as "someone apart" within the labyrinthine world of politics and of the theatre affected, and at

times determined, the artistic and ethical choices he felt he had to make in order at times to survive, and also to continue to speak subtly but pointedly to his audience and to his nation through the theatre. He would have to move cautiously.

And Braun had to learn very early to chart his own course. The previous chapter has already discussed the cynical wooing of actors and directors by the Party in the 1970s with the promise of economic and social prestige. This abdication of the moral authority of the national theatre forced audiences to search elsewhere for a theatre that would address the crisis of cultural values and moral choices for the people of Poland. Braun would go out to meet them, but he would not have to wait until the seventies to have his destiny determined by the manueverings of political favoritism and Party coercion. "Apartness" would place him on the road to begin his slow progress toward a theatre of the community as early as 1962.

In that year, as an extremely promising graduate of the State School of Drama he was awarded a staff directing position with Teatr Polski (The Polish Theatre) in Warsaw. Like New York City, Warsaw is the cultural and theatrical mecca of the country and the city in which young directors can make national names for themselves very quickly. But in 1964 Jerzy Krasowski was named Artistic Director of the theatre, and as a loyal member of the Party, proceeded to

clean house. Braun was immediately dismissed. In one sense Braun's career can be seen as a long and wide detour around this initial highroad to success and national acclaim. Not only artistically, but geographically, Braun was forced to forge his own path outside the central corridors of power. (Krasowski and his wife Krystyna Skuszanka went on eventually to gain prestige and popularity as the co-directors of the Juliusz Słowacki Theatre in Kraków in the 1970s.) Some have moral choices thrust upon them.

Braun's political status as a non-communist in a theatre system loaded with the benefactors of Party privilege was further diminished by his spiritual status as a practicing Catholic. He maintained close friendships among members of the clergy and the Church hierarchy, and those friendships bound him even more strongly to a sense of genuine community that began forming itself in opposition to a regime which, as the seventies progressed, cynically denied and degraded the spiritual values cherished by virtually every Pole. In many ways the Catholic Church in Poland embodies the authentic spirit of Polish nationalism, but a nationalism whose roots reach deeper into the soul and history of Poland than forty years of Communist rule could hope to touch. The Church wields no political power in actuality, and at times it has had to play the awkward role of mediator between the people and the regime in Poland. But under the inspired and courageous leadership of Cardinal

Wyszyński, which lasted from 1952 until his death in 1981, the Catholic Church's devotion to spiritual salvation became inextricably linked to an idea of national salvation, to freedom of speech, and to a genuine expression of community. The gradual transformation of this profound spiritual power, wielded by the Church, into a very real and formidable political power was accelerated by the election of Cardinal Wojtyła to the throne of St. Peter in 1978. As the 1970s progressed, the Church came more and more to be identified with the spirit and voice of opposition, and of defiant solidarity.

The genesis of Braun's vision of a theatre for the community can be directly traced to his early and continued faith in the most basic Christian teachings of the Church. In a recent article titled "Contemporary Theatre In Search of the Sacred," he expresses his belief that, at its heart, the experience of theatre is a sacred encounter in which a performer and a spectator can seek and find Christ in one another. As he says, "The greatest chance and gift offered by the theatre is the meeting man to man, and seeing in each other his own human nature, his own holiness."[2] In one respect Braun's course in the theatre can be charted as a slow gravitation away from the institutional theatre and toward a kind of theatre that more truly represented the teachings of the Church. I think it could also be said that Braun gained courage and greater conviction to challenge the

authorities as the Church came to represent a greater voice of authority in the country for millions of Poles.

But if Braun's idea of a new kind of theatre could be termed in the broadest sense "sacred," and his progress toward it an act of moral faith, it cannot be denied that the world he entered as a director in the 1960s was a very secular one, struggling with the contemporary worldly weaknesses of political timidity and moral lethargy. Braun's community, before it could hope to achieve the sacred, would have to undergo a prolonged and rigorous examination of its public conscience in the harsh light of his theatre.

Although the 1960s witnessed a tremendous resurgence of the power and vitality of the theatre of Poland, culture and society did not recover so easily from the devastating memory of the war, a humiliating occupation, and the abject defeat of national will. The sixties was a period of intense self-scrutiny and examination of the national character. The theatre looked at the past glory of Poland with a mixture of sad nostalgia and bitter mockery. The past was dead but playwrights and directors resurrected it in the theatre as a means of salvaging what they could to construct a new order in the world. Playwrights such as Mrożek and Różewicz focused obsessively on the individual who has lost all sense of himself and his connection to the world, but who struggles fiercely to maintain some sense of integrity, personal identity, and hope.[3]

Much of the theatre of the sixties scoffed at all absolutes and ideals, but only as a necessary stage in the reconstruction of the world and of an idea of the self that, no matter how fragile, could help Poland look to the future, even if that future was bleak and uncertain. Poland needed to reconnect itself to its past greatness, but it could not live on dreams and poetry alone. It needed to recover a sense of collective will, but it could not deny the reality of the recent past. The times required a theatre that would force people to think about the past and to examine their own lives as part of a mission to recover a sense of destiny. Poles would have to accept with a kind of ruthless integrity the hard realities of their contemporary world, but also understand that there were spiritual resources they could draw on which, if they were prepared to struggle, would not fail them. It would take time.

The rediscovery and revitalization of the plays of Poland's great nineteenth-century bards helped enormously to inject a sense of destiny and moral challenge into the current political struggles. The 1960s was the decade of the aggressive contemporizing of Polish romantic drama. The romantic repertoire was found to have extraordinary applicability and power to speak to the crises of the times. As Elżbieta Wysińska says, ". . . a special characteristic of Polish theatre today is its use of national classics to comment on crucial contemporary issues."[4] Even new plays

such as Mrożek's Tango (1964) and Różewicz's The Card Index (1960) are conscious and highly ironic rewritings of romantic myths and literary traditions. During the sixties a new generation of exciting and innovative directors began to appear. They included, along with Braun, Jerzy Grzegorzewski, Izabela Cywińska, Maciej Prus, and others who staged both national classics and contemporary plays from Poland and the West as shrewd commentaries on the current political climate. But it was the classics that seemed to provide the clearest model for examining the ravages of Polish history, the desperate search for a moral center in the individual, and a possible program for unified action.

The restaging of the classics allowed directors both to exorcise, as well as absorb, some of the heroic mystique and severe moral spirit of the romantic tradition. Drawing on fresh new theatrical techniques from France and Germany, Polish directors began to devise a harder-edged and more ironic stage idiom for the recasting of the classics. Incorporating elements of collage, cabaret-style acting, Brechtian staging techniques, and savagely grotesque and absurd atmosphere, these young directors began to break through the aura of poetic reverence and spectacle inherited from the tradition of monumental theatre, and to discover strikingly contemporary resonances and hard historical lessons in these classic dramas.[5] Productions attempted both to demystify and retheatricalize the historical, poetic, and spiritual

material of these texts. The staging of a classic became a dialogue with the past and a debate with the present about what guiding spirits could be made to live again, and what ghosts should be allowed, finally, to be put to rest.

Braun participated fully and determinedly in this growing tradition of a politically committed, contemporary theatre engaged in a spirited and sophisticated dialogue with its own past. But as a man who stood apart even within his own generation of directors, Braun pursued a more spiritually driven iconoclasm. Specifically, he drew on the inspiration of two poet-playwrights, Cyprian Norwid and Stanisław Wyspiański, whose work, as has already been mentioned, both celebrated and sharply criticized their native tradition of romanticism and the role of the poet as a national prophet and spiritual savior of the people. Norwid and Wyspiański expressed a deep reverence for that tradition in their work, but also a deep skepticism about its susceptibility to self-defeat, and the influence they exerted on Braun's imagination from the very beginning of his career was deep and pervasive. Braun calls them his "spiritual fathers."

Although it is dangerous to compare two such singular poetic voices in the Polish theatre, they do reveal a remarkable similarity in the impact they made on the work Braun did in the sixties, and on the early evolution of his ideas about the need for a truly contemporary theatre. That

similarity lies in the coincidence of two, in many ways opposing, attitudes toward the role of the national poet in an increasingly chaotic and spiritually confused modern world. Both men gravely acknowledged the severe destiny the poet in Poland must face in order to speak to, and on behalf of, his nation. They looked upon the role of the poet as national prophet and savior (known in Polish as wieszcz) as a sacred calling, and they accepted it with the same humility with which one would accept a calling to the priesthood.

But both Norwid and Wyspiański wrote their dramas following the zenith of romanticism, and their work is infused with a sharply critical, one could even say satirical, attitude toward the nation they were attempting to save. Both men cast the poet in the role of the alienated hero who remains spiritually isolated within his own society, which is ruled by superficial dilettantes and self-absorbed dreamers. Although Norwid and Wyspiański were not contemporaries, they do both reveal a distinctly modernist temperament in the highly ironic attitude, bordering on despair, that they expressed toward their own mission and its possibilities for success in an increasingly urban, class-conscious, and materialistic society. Both poets found their respective societies dangerously lacking in the spiritual and moral qualities required of a people who want to change the world and transform history. Norwid and Wyspiański were willing to be prophets without honor, and

they used the theatre to force Polish society to look at itself with its own eyes. And Braun would use the theatre of Norwid and Wyspiański for the same purpose, to fix the image of contemporary Polish society in a dark and at times grotesque mirror, and force it to examine itself in the glass.

Anticipating by many years the postwar Polish writers whose plays were deeply influenced by the wave of Absurdism from France, both Norwid and Wyspiański used theatre as theatre, which openly acknowledges itself as empty form, to portray contemporary society as profoundly alienated from itself and cut off from its authentic life as a community through self-absorption, spiritual vacuity, and moral lethargy. This persistence of so much of modern theatre to expose itself as pure form, as theatre, in order to show society trapped in a circle of empty rituals and petrified roles is prefigured by Norwid in such plays as The Actor (Aktor) and In the Wings (Za Kulisami), and by Wyspiański in November Night (Noc Listopadowa), in which a key scene takes place in a theatre during a performance, and Deliverance (Wyzwolenie), which takes place on the bare stage of an actual Kraków theatre.

Both poets not only use the traditional play-within-a-play technique in their dramas, they also use the actual performance of a play which is assembled and witnessed right

on stage to expose the spiritual bankruptcy of their society. The performance either fails or breaks down primarily because of its failure to please an on-stage audience, who act as surrogates of the audience in the theatre, or because of the failure of the performers themselves to believe in the authenticity of the performance. Norwid and Wyspiański use this model of an aborted or failed theatre, which cannot elevate itself above its debased status as empty performance, as the model of a self-absorbed society which cannot escape its own impoverished imagination and create a collective myth that will enable the nation to believe in itself and act as a united people.

During the 1960s, Braun, drawing on the inspiration of Norwid and Wyspiański, first built a solid foundation for his theatre by stripping away the mystical aura surrounding Polish romanticism and investigating the essential values that permeated that great literary tradition. He juxtaposed the national feeling and looming sense of destiny that this tradition still excited in people with cool observations on the sober realities of social and political life in Poland in the sixties. The first decade of Braun's work has been characterized by Justyna Hoffman as his pursuit of "theatre-within-the-theatre-location,"[6] and as the phrase suggests, this period was marked by his keen interest in the theatre of Bertolt Brecht and also Luigi Pirandello. Braun staged the plays of Norwid and Wyspiański, as well as plays of the

modern repertoire, in order to "wake society up,"[7] as he says, and reinvest it with clear intelligence, a sense of moral purpose, and a healthy understanding of the very real challenges that his society would have to face in the 1960s.

To accomplish this, Braun first set out to create a palpable atmosphere of the "here and now" in the theatre building itself. For Braun the theatre must first be treated as a physical space, a "meeting place." In the sixties the theatre could no longer be a place of mystical transport or spiritual reveries. It would be a place where people could confront an idea of themselves as it was embodied in the action on stage, an idea which, for Braun, was meant to challenge both the best and the worst tendencies in his audience. Through the plays of Norwid and Wyspiański, Braun was able to bring the volatile material of the romantic tradition, with its call to glory, heroism, and sacrifice, directly into the rough arena of contemporary life, into the midst of his audience, where it could be examined, challenged, and also absorbed by them. There in the theatre, the still vital truth of that tradition could be extracted and reintegrated into the lives of the people.

Braun wanted to issue both a warning and a challenge to Polish society in the sixties. He wanted to warn his audience not to succumb to the dreams of past glory as a substitute for present doubts, but he also wanted to convince them that that tradition still lived today as internal

values and forces of spirit, intellect, and moral courage which could be nurtured and strengthened in a day-to-day struggle with the demands of national destiny. Braun wanted to exorcise the ghosts of the past which weighed on the present in order to allow them to be reborn in the hearts and minds of his audience. In one sense Braun assumed the role of Konrad, the visionary poet and national savior created by Mickiewicz in Forefathers' Eve, who would reappear seventy-five years later in an empty Kraków theatre and cry out in defiance of tradition, "Poetry begone!"[8]

Braun actually came under the spiritual guidance of Norwid and Wyspiański even before he began his theatre work. He had read a great deal of Norwid while he was a student of literature at Poznań University, and he chose to do his thesis for the Master of Letters on his theatre and drama. It was Norwid who helped Braun shape his own identity as an artist and as a man who would have to go his own way in the world. In Norwid Braun saw a man who was willing, despite rejection and even ridicule, to go his way alone in pursuit of a deeply personal vision of a reunited Polish community, although Norwid well understood that that reunification might take years and even centuries after his own lifetime to be realized. Norwid carried within himself a profound faith that the Polish nation did possess the strength and spiritual will to reunite the two great classes in Polish society--the intelligentsia and the common people, which was

(and has been for hundreds of years) the single most important and most difficult obstacle to national liberation. But he realized that this would be accomplished only through years of dedicated and patient struggle. For Norwid national ideals and values were inseparable from personal virtues, and to free the nation it would be necessary first to free the individual to live an authentically Christian life.

Norwid saw the work of the artist as only one aspect of a life devoted to authentic creativity, which he believed had its source in the power of each individual to be fully human. And most important for Braun, Norwid believed that the theatre (and all other arts) was not a special form of the transcendent to which the nation aspired in spirit. On the contrary, theatre must serve the greater good of the community and support its total cultural life. The artist does not come down from the mountain to bestow greatness on his people and lift them up. He is a servant of the community who works tirelessly on its behalf. Theatre expresses the value, and recognizes the vital contribution, of all aspects of community. As Norwid says, art is simply "the collective work of the community illuminated by love."[9] Theatre is not just an aesthetic but also an ethical expression of the spiritual life of the community. It is an expression of the value the community places on humanity, and a sensitive register of its existence. The

final tragic irony of Norwid's life is that he died friendless and penniless in a Paris debtors' prison.

Norwid's willingness to accept his fate as a poet who would die misunderstood and rejected by the very society he was trying so desperately to reach out to did not inure him to the blatant arrogance, stupidity, and shallowness of that same society. Indeed, he felt as a prophet in the wilderness that he should play the role of moral scourge, and the portrait he draws of contemporary society in mid-nineteenth century Poland is that of a grotesque masquerade of cynical, greedy consumers of culture, and Czarist collaborators. Julian Krzyżanowski calls these plays of acid social criticism "comedies of a higher sphere," and these also left the most influential mark on Braun's early work as a director.[10] They include The Ring of the Great Lady (Pierścień wielkiej damy), The Actor, and In the Wings. Between 1961 and 1970 he directed these three plays both for theatre and for television, and he also staged Caesar and Cleopatra, an historical allegory in which Egypt, as the ancient, proud, Eastern world, comes into conflict with the new, enlightened Western world of Rome. (During these same years he also staged his own original play based on the diary writings and poetry of Norwid called I Write an Artist's Diary (Piszę Pamiętnik Artysty). He also produced it for Warsaw television in 1970.)

Norwid called his plays hautes comédies, and he needed to borrow this French term because Poland, he said, lacked any kind of sharply satiric dramatic form which would "force society to look at itself with its own eyes."[11] Despite their designation as comedies, these plays are actually dark, tragi-comedies in which Norwid explores the artist's lonely struggle for personal authenticity, and the temptations of fashionable mediocrity in a world of rabid social conformity. He focuses on an individual, most often a poet or actor, who suffers humiliating ostracism at the hands of a society which celebrates itself within a highly artificial theatre of class snobbery and salon life. Theatre and role-playing become a central metaphor of a society profoundly alienated from itself and so vapidly self-absorbed that it cannot comprehend a true expression of art or the authenticity of the artist.

In the Wings is Norwid's most vehement condemnation of his society, which cannot recognize a genuine work of poetic art filled with human feeling and moral courage, even when it is performed in front of that society's most fashionably astute representatives. In the Wings also establishes a continuum within Braun's own work in the 1960s. It was Braun's wide knowledge of, and deep affection for, Norwid that gained him admittance to the Drama School in Warsaw in 1958. He was required to submit a dramaturgical analysis of a play, and he chose In the Wings. The play is built around

Norwid's attempt to create "theatre-within-the-theatre" as a model of self-alienated society, and Braun magnified the tension and the many parallels between the fictional world of the play (which is set in an actual theatre in Warsaw in 1865), and the drama which is performed in that same theatre before Warsaw society and ultimately rejected by it.

In the Wings begins in the vestibule of a theatre where fashionable literati and the members of high Warsaw society have gathered to watch and pass judgement on a new play written by Count Omegitt, Norwid's representative of the lonely, unacknowledged artist. The new play is called Tyrtaeus and tells the story of a Greek poet who is summoned by the leadership of the Greek army to head an expeditionary force against Sparta. During the course of this play-within-a-play Tyrtaeus is judged to be unfit, or at least unsuitable, for leadership. Count Omegitt's chief rivals in this salon society of Warsaw's literary elite are Sofistoff, a high government official and a Russian who is also Omegitt's rival for the love of a young, beautiful socialite, Lia; Gluckschnell, a true "lover of art" and purveyor of popular theatrical entertainment; and Fiffraque, a successful French playwright of boulevard comedies and melodramas.

Tyrtaeus is performed on the stage of the Warsaw theatre before this crowd of literary fashion mongers. The performance of Omegitt's play is meant to take up a significant portion of the action of In the Wings, and must be

performed with great emotional sensitivity and poetic feeling. It is of course a disaster. A play which probes the role of the artist in society as a poet and philosopher of impeccable integrity must be ridiculed by a consumer society that has been fed on a confectionery diet of melodramas, light comedies, and operettas. The young socialite Lia embodies the shimmering image of the vacuousness and superficiality of contemporary Polish society. She rejects Omegitt after the failure of Tyrtaeus and accepts the offer of marriage from Sofistoff. This is the most chilling act of self-betrayal in the play. Lia willingly collaborates in her own debasement and cultural enslavement at the hands of charming Czarist occupiers. Norwid began In the Wings in 1865, shortly after the crushing defeat of the January Rising. The play enacts a fairly common occasion at the time where lavish fetes were held in theatres in major cities in Poland as celebrations of political "reconciliation."

In his dramaturgical analysis Braun sharpened the moral parallels not only between the theatrical world of Tyrtaeus and the social world of In the Wings, but also between the theatrical world of In the Wings and the real world of the spectators sitting in the theatre at the time of the performance. Braun even called for a scale model of the theatre in which the play would be performed to be brought on

stage at certain times and referred to by various characters. He intended the audience to be included in the concentric circles of theatre-within-the-theatre-within-the-theatre, as it were. From these earliest thoughts on the theatre, it is evident that Braun envisioned an event that would awaken an audience's awareness that they were in the theatre, at a particular place and a particular time, and whose duty it was to be an audience. The theatre is a building, and whatever meaning is to be discovered there must breach the charmed circle of art behind the proscenium and reach out to the walls that surround the spectators. Only then can the theatre fulfill its vision as a total social act.

In the Wings continued to exert an enormous influence on Braun's work in the sixties and on the progress of his ideas about a theatre for the community. He staged the play for Warsaw television in 1966. But it was in 1970 at the Słowacki Theatre in Kraków that Braun fulfilled on stage the original vision he had conceived and outlined in his dramaturgical analysis twelve years earlier. He envisioned the production also as the most articulate and forceful expression yet of this central idea that he had been working toward and crystallizing in the 1960s of "theatre-within-the-theatre location." He succeeded in intermingling three levels of reality present in the theatre and obliterating

the artificial and purely conventional barriers that keep them comfortably distinct. To merge these three levels or worlds--the real world of the spectators, the fictional world of Warsaw society of 1865, and the theatrical world of Tyrtaeus--Braun cast in the role of Omegitt a well-known and much-loved Kraków actor who also happened to be a greatly admired poet. His name was Leszek Herdegen (he is now deceased), and at the time of the production he had just published a new book of poetry which was very popular. Braun cast Herdegen as both Omegitt and as the lead actor in the performance Tyrtaeus. Omegitt thus played the central character in his own play, the part of Tyrtaeus, a rejected, but eloquent, poet. The actor, the character of Omegitt, and the acted character of Tyrtaeus became fused in one man: Herdegen. Thus through the very physical presence of Herdegen on the stage of the Słowacki Theatre in Kraków Braun succeeded in merging the three worlds of the play and rending the veil of artifice that separated illusion and reality, past and present, fictional characters and living actors.

In his design concept for the production Braun also tried to encompass the entire theatre with the performance and extend the limits of the created world to the edges of the physical space. He bound the performance with, literally, the four walls of the theatre building. Braun's

design concept called for a painted backdrop which would act as a mirror, on stage, of the auditorium space. The Slowacki Theatre is a typical late-nineteenth century building that includes orchestra seating surrounded by three levels of galleries which were originally private boxes.[12] Braun had this series of galleries, which extend in a horseshoe shape around the entire theatre to the edges of the proscenium arch, duplicated on a cyclorama which extended around the back of the stage space in the same horseshoe curve. The audience, in effect, watched themselves watch the performance, and as Tyrtaeus was being performed, the on-stage audience sat and stood around the edge of the back-drop, in effect creating a theatre-in-the-round. Tyrtaeus was staged by Braun to break up the rigid demarcation of the proscenium arch which forces the actors to play full-front. He connected the auditorium to the stage within a single physical environment by having the performance of Tyrtaeus play to both the on-stage and the real audience.

Braun's use of a two-dimensional painted back-drop created an environment that was both intimate and highly theatrical. This would become characteristic of many of his later productions in which an audience is brought directly into the midst of the performance, surrounded by it, and yet also continually reminded that what they are watching is, in fact, only a performance. By using the painted back-drop

Braun intended to make the audience aware of their complicity in the action on stage as it unfolded, to see themselves as directly implicated in it. But the back-drop also forced the audience to acknowledge the antic artificiality of the world of the theatre to which people come for escape, entertainment, and social affirmation. The on-stage spectators, parading in their masquerade, became surrogates for the spectators sitting in the auditorium in their elegant evening clothes. The whole performance exposed the ostentatious theatricality of the "real" audience sitting in the theatre.

Not only in the character of Omegitt/Tyrtaeus, but in many of the characters Braun found an opportunity to further blur the barrier that separated the various levels of reality in In the Wings. Omegitt became the head of his own acting company, which mingled and interacted with guests at the party in the theatre. In Norwid's text the actors enter only at the appointed time to perform the play. In Braun's production the actors left to change into Greek costume for the performance of Tyrtaeus, and when it ended Omegitt remained in costume and returned to the party. Wearing chitons and sandals, he merged with the fashionable members of Warsaw society, drawing the two worlds into each other. Braun's strongest and most damning statement about the nature of contemporary (whether nineteenth or twentieth century) society was made through the character of the

socialite Lia. Braun cast Lia as an actress who played the part of Tyrtaeus's lover Eginea. Eginea remains faithful to Tyrtaeus after he is rejected as a leader, but Lia rejects Omegitt after the failure of his play in favor of her charming Russian suitor. The failure to recognize and accept authentic art became indistinguishable from the failure to understand and accept authentic love.

Braun felt that this dual rejection was the heart of Norwid's play, and he built his production in Kraków upon what he called "the realistic motivation within the dramatic structure."[13] Great focus was given to Omegitt's love of Lia, and his play became a direct expression of that love. His sense of loss and failure became heartbreakingly real. Braun conceived of the entire production as a "polemical dialogue with Horzyca."[14] Wilam Horzyca had been a highly respected director who, before his death in 1958, helped to further establish the monumental style of directing begun by Schiller. Braun greatly admired Horzyca as a complete man of the theatre. He was a student of philosophy and literature, a critic and theorist, and a very astute theatre manager. Braun felt a strong spiritual kinship with him, particularly because of the wide scope of his talents and his enormous dedication to the traditions of Polish theatre. He was also a Catholic.

Horzyca advocated an intensely visionary theatre called the "theatre of the imagination." He had also mounted the

only two previous productions of In the Wings to be staged in Poland. Norwid's text is not a finished play, and contains a number of prologues. There is no established order to the many scenes of Tyrtaeus, or to the scenes in In the Wings dealing with contemporary Poland. Horzyca created a text in which the performance of Tyrtaeus, in a sense, enveloped the entire action in a kind of vision. In his review of Braun's production Zygmunt Greń briefly describes this earlier production. At one point the performance of Tyrtaeus literally burst through the walls of the (on-stage) theatre where the guests had gathered, and elevated the production to the level of a pure visionary force of national consciousness. Apparently it was difficult to determine whether this performance was simply a poetic embodiment of the crushing of the walls of repression and power, or an act of revolt performed by the actors of Tyrtaeus. (That was quite probably Horzyca's point.)

Braun restructured the text of In the Wings so that the world of Polish high society clearly surrounded Tyrtaeus and in effect smothered it. He eliminated the monumental dimension of the play and brought it down to the level of strong psychological motivation and social drama. The performance of Tyrtaeus was intended to express the beauty of the poetry and the genuineness of the emotional life in the text. Braun felt that the grandeur of the play lay in its

expression of inner truth and feeling, and not in the external power of its theatrical splendor. Braun sought the truth of the play in his own actors and in their ability to express with painful honesty the "realistic motivations" of the play.

The production opened on September 12, 1970. The critic Zygmunt Greń's major objection to Braun's production of In the Wings was that by reducing the play to the level of psychological motivation and hard-edged social criticism Braun had also reduced, or even negated, the true poetic power of Tyrtaeus (and consequently of In the Wings) as an expression of national ideals and collective strength. As Greń says, ". . . we are not very surprised that such a Tyrtaeus was booed by the public. This is the awkwardness of the directorial concept."[15] This fundamental criticism of Braun's production would be echoed by critics of his later productions who viewed his attempts to discover a startlingly contemporary context for classic texts as an emasculation of a great literary tradition and a dilution of its visionary power.

But it was (and is) Braun's conviction that In the Wings speaks with an incalculably greater eloquence, in purely theatrical terms, if an audience can be convinced that these figures of past glory (Greece as surrogate for Poland) do not inhabit some rare visionary realm, but in fact walk among them. It was Braun's intention to impress

upon his audience that the principles and convictions expressed in Tyrtaeus were real and fundamentally realizable in the lives of people sitting in the Słowacki Theatre at the moment of performance. The production was intended neither as an ecstatic vision of hope and glory nor as a severe and bitter moral lesson. It was meant as an open challenge to the audience to consider the possibility of living a certain kind of life even in a hostile world of moral compromise and political intimidation. This was Braun's very contemporary reading of Norwid's play.

Braun drove this point home in the final scene of the production, which in his ordering of the text took place in the now-empty theatre. In a very brief scene, Omegitt and his company of actors gather together, and he speaks some words of consolation and encouragement to them. They then leave the theatre led by Omegitt. Braun staged this scene as a startling theatrical coup which broke through the final veil of illusion that separated the actors from the spectators seated on the auditorium. Omegitt came on stage alone, and then suddenly the painted canvas backdrop was raised at the back of the theatre to expose the stage door. The door opened and Omegitt's company of actors entered from the street to meet him on the bare stage. The three worlds became one as the actors, still in Greek costume, stood on the actual stage of the Słowacki Theatre.

To draw the final connection between the past and the present, Braun interpolated a fragment of poetry from one of Norwid's verse prologues for the play. It is one of the most famous pieces of Polish poetry both in Poland and in the West because the novelist Jerzy Andrzejewski used the phrase "ashes and diamonds" as the title of his brilliant novel about postwar life in Poland. In the midst of failure and humiliation, Omegitt asked his company whether "all of that which disappears into the abyss will leave only ashes and confusion? Or whether underneath the ashes . . . a shining diamond will remain."[16] The only possible answer to that question would, of course, have to come from the people sitting in the theatre each night. As the scene ended, Omegitt and his company exited through the stage door out onto the streets of Kraków.

Zygmunt Gren's final judgement on the production is benignly equivocal. He admires the bold innovation, and even the "courage" (odwaga), which Braun demonstrated in tackling such a difficult and poetically complex work. But Gren feels finally that the attempt to bring this material "down to the tastes of the contemporary consumer" must inevitably fail because it "hackneys" (banalizuję, literally "banalizes") the charged poetic atmosphere of the play (which is subtitled a "dramatic fantasy").[17] It is not perhaps that Gren, who is a rigorously intellectual critic, objects to Braun's production in and of itself, as much as

he rejects the idea that an audience of "consumers" could be made to appreciate the poetic and intellectual complexities of Norwid's text. Not surprisingly perhaps, Marta Fik would level the same charge against Braun's production of The Interrupted Act on behalf of the intellectually intricate and philosophically sophisticated art of Różewicz.

For many critics, "contemporizing" the great literature of the romantic tradition amounted to pandering to popular appetites for "hip" topicality and a strained relevance. Such critics argue, at times very persuasively, that the meaning an author invests in his play, which is intended to be absorbed on many complex, subtle, and refractive levels, would be rendered, as Grein maintains, "banal", as directors sought for a more direct and often numbingly obvious connection to the current political situation. The debate would continue to rage through the rest of Braun's career and would become even more heated as the Polish theatre and Polish society moved into the seventies. The debate is still far from over.

Norwid established a continuum in Braun's work in the 1960s, and helped him to build the foundations of an aggressively contemporary theatre that offered a tough moral challenge to his audience. Braun's work with the plays of Stanisław Wyspiański would enable him to pass beyond this initial phase of contemporizing the theatre to a stage where

the theatre became an expression of imminent national destiny. Justyna Hoffman divides Braun's career into three successive stages of evolution: "the staging theatre, the poetic theatre, and the theatre of space."[18] Braun's work with Norwid enabled him to break through the walls of the "staging theatre," which is equivalent to the "monumental" tradition of staging the romantic repertoire, in large part because Braun treated this late-romantic poet as a very modern theatre artist deeply committed to understanding contemporary social and political realities.

Wyspiański was, and is, a thoroughly contemporary playwright whose sharp insights into the workings and tensions of Polish society and culture speak eloquently even today. But his theatre takes those pressing issues of immediate social and political import and lifts them up into a realm of sweeping mystical visions of the fate of Poland in its protracted struggles as a nation. Wyspiański wrote most of his major plays around the turn of the century, and his most important probe deeply into, and closely examine, critical events in Polish history. But he was also a genuine theatrical visionary and his dramas are indeed born as "visions," as Braun calls them, sprung full-blown from the mind of an immensely daring man of the theatre. He was also a superb painter. Virtually every significant theatrical innovation of the twentieth century can be found in his

plays. But it was ultimately Wyspiański's keen understanding of the hard realities of power, history, and national life, combined with his genius for theatrically elevating those realities to a vaster plane of mystical destiny that fascinated Braun and moved him so deeply. He wanted "to learn from Wyspiański,"[19] in the same way he would one day attempt to learn from Różewicz. It would not be so much a question of what Braun would do with Wyspiański, but what Wyspiański would do with Braun.

Through his work with Wyspiański, Braun attempted to make the very difficult transition from the constrictions (and the easy luxuries) of the "staging theatre," and gain a more authoritative control of the techniques of the "poetic theatre." To do this Braun needed to learn to articulate a new concrete theatrical poetry that would remain firmly anchored in the pressing issues of social and political life that his audience had to face every day. But at the same time he needed to be able to lift those issues to a plane of collective experience that would express the gathering momentum of destiny for the Polish people as the sixties progressed. Braun's audience did not only have to take a long, hard look at themselves and at the moral challenges they would have to face in the coming years, but they would also have to look at themselves in the context of the very real demands of the past--its dreams, its lost glory, and its humiliating defeats. Drawing on Wyspiański's genius,

Braun attempted to create a theatre that would enable his audience gradually to re-enter history, gain courage and wisdom, and face the future.

Between 1965 and 1972 Braun directed three of Wyspianski's most powerful and theatrically most complex dramatic works, The Wedding, November Night, and Deliverance. Each play is thoroughly grounded in a specific, recognizable, and authentic milieu. The Wedding recreates the occasion of an actual wedding of the period and is in part a scathing satire on very well-known members of the Polish gentry and Kraków literary circles. It is an extended pièce à clef. November Night focuses on the disastrous events of a single night, November 29, 1830, and examines the forces behind the outbreak of a major insurrection in Warsaw against the Czar. On one level the play is a direct indictment of the arrogance and impotence of the actual leaders of that insurrection. And as has already been mentioned, Deliverance takes place in an empty theatre in Kraków and incorporates the work of an acting company, in residence at the theatre, into the production of a play whose creator and star is Mickiewicz's hero, Konrad. Laced into each play is the sense of an overwhelming historical crisis which an audience, and a director, must confront. It is a confrontation with the burden of historical catastrophe and national failure, but also with the burden, equally oppressive, of

inspired poetry, remembered glory, and the awful demands of the "moment."

In these plays Wyspiański exercised his very specific, and very Polish, genius to cause many different levels of reality--historical, psychological, mythological, spiritual--to collide and co-exist within the same intensely theatrical world. These various planes seem to co-exist quite logically and consistently, even as they invade each others' territory and create bizarre configurations of characters and poetic moods. Braun even argues that Wyspiański anticipates the "realistic-poetic" theatre of Różewicz through his genius for creating highly charged theatrical collages out of history, biography, poetry, journalism, and philosophical debate. Wyspiański intermingles the plane of a familiar, even mundane, social milieu with that of vast contemplation and prolonged meditation on the imponderables of history and destiny. And they combine, as do the plays of Różewicz, a strong underpinning of sharp social satire along with an accumulating sense of disaster and fatality. But most important for Braun and his progress toward the "theatre of space," Wyspiański explored the power of real space (the Kraków theatre, Wawel Castle) to anchor and localize his high poetic visions of national destiny. This startling juxtaposition of very specific, concrete reality and poetic conception, intensified by the pressure of the immediate historical moment, provided the inspiration

and daring Braun needed to begin to move out of the theatre into the community.[20]

Braun's first opportunity to stage Wyspiański came in 1965 at the Teatr imienia Wilam Horzycy (the Wilam Horzyca Theatre) in Toruń. He had been seeking a venue to mount The Wedding, and 1965 marked the two-hundred year anniversary of the founding of the National Theatre in Warsaw. Theatres around the country were producing the great "classics" as part of the celebration. Braun's express purpose in staging the play was to "wake up the audience," who had been contentedly dozing through the sixties. The riots of 1968 were still three years away but Polish society, it seemed to him, was sadly unprepared, morally or politically, to undertake any campaign of collective resistance should events converge. (The riots, primarily of students, were a disaster, and resulted in one of the most savage purges of the Communist Party in recent Polish history. The Wedding proved prophetic.)

To effect this harsh awakening, Braun departed sharply from the received tradition of staging Wyspiański in Poland in the recent past. The world of The Wedding is inhabited by well-known and immediately recognizable figures from Polish history, myth, and legend who powerfully conjure up the memory of the political and spiritual greatness of the country. Tradition had paid a kind of theatrical homage to these figures by rendering them through an authentic and

respectful recreation of the past, within an overall monumental style of production. Whether the characters inhabited the social, mythological, or literary plane, they made their appearances as old and familiar, if somewhat awe-inspiring faces. The setting for the play was also most often rendered realistically. The action is set in a simple, rustic common room, called an izba in Polish, that is a standard feature of most peasant houses in Poland. Within this one room all the characters meet during the wedding reception and flirt, debate, dream, and encounter their own doubles who invade the room from another plane of history and legend. In this one room the intoxicating dream of a national insurrection is born. And within this simple, rough room the world of contemporary Poland (1901) and the fantastic realm of the past meet and merge.

Braun's first radical creative act was to explode the restrictive confines of this tiny room of rough-hewn timbers. In his design concept for the production he combined the walls and the ceiling into a single, massive structure of thick, wide planks that jutted diagonally up and out from the back of the stage toward the audience. The planks were attached to large cross beams in a widening fan shape with visible spaces between them to create a disturbing sensation that this massive structure was beginning to soar up into the sky and fly apart. At the back of the stage a small section of the structure acted as a doorway for the entrance

and exit of the guests. There were no other functional doors or window units.

It was in the portrayal of the imposing figures of history and legend that Braun broke most aggressively with the tradition of staging the play with great attention to realistic detail. He felt that this tradition placed both more and less of a burden on an audience than it should. It was more of a burden to the extent that these figures, envisioned as immediately recognizable phantoms of the past, oppressed an audience with the terrible memory of lost glory, failed dreams, and spilled blood. A contemporary audience, Braun felt, would pale at the prospect of engaging history on its own terms in the form of resurrected ghosts. But in their familiar, if harrowing, form, these figures risen from the dead were also less of a burden because they were simply too removed, too entrenched in the spectacle of historical pageantry, to affect an audience who still refused to recognize or accept the call of national destiny. As figures who command such historical and literary reverence, characters such as Wernyhora, the great wandering bard who championed national unity in the Eighteenth Century, and Szela, the blood-thirsty leader of a peasant revolt in 1846 that resulted in a massacre of the nobility, were both too familiar and too formidable to challenge a contemporary audience unwilling to accept them as still potentially vital

forces of political power, collective imagination, or national conscience.

To break these characters out of the mold of revered historical iconography, Braun transfigured them into enormous, almost primitive, idols. From the beginning of the performance these figures, which stood nearly five meters tall, were positioned around the back of the stage in front of a huge cyclorama washed with blue light. The figures seemed to hover or linger on the horizon. They remained in position throughout the performance, standing motionless in half silhouette, until the moment they glided silently and with grave solemnity into the interior playing space for the dream scenes. Actors stood inside these enormous effigies and intoned their poetic dialogue, while they moved the arms and huge hands with Bunraku-like sticks.

By so overtly and fantastically theatricalizing these characters of history, myth, and legend, Braun intended first to demystify them by transforming them into great puppets or theatrical dolls. They came to possess a kind of magic that transformed intimidation into enchantment, and through it Braun was able to restore their very real power as living forces of intellect, imagination, and collective spirit which could challenge and inspire a contemporary audience. And by abstracting the single room setting into a nearly overwhelming expressionistic environment, Braun succeeded in creating a dynamic dream space, or

theatrical limbo, where human beings and legendary phantoms coexisted, and where the many levels of reality in the play flowed together and intermingled with the ease of a surrealistic film.

The critic Michał Kasperowicz immensely admired the production, which opened on June 19, 1965, especially for this reason, and was particularly struck by the emotional and theatrical current that flowed between the larger-than-life characters and the wedding guests. But the singular success of the entire production was, for Kasperowicz, its eloquence as a work of intensely theatrical poetry to speak with a voice that was both "thoroughly contemporary and at the same time close to Wyspiański."[21] He credits the actors, and Braun's control of them, with unifying the style and the heightened dream atmosphere of the play. He agrees with Braun's bold decision to embody the historical and legendary characters as powerful and vivid "projections of dreams, subconscious desires."[22] But Kasperowicz is especially moved by the profound affect that these projections have on the inner lives of their contemporary counterparts. He goes so far as to maintain that what is spoken by these idol-like beings is less significant than the fact that an audience must see how deeply these poetic and hallucinatory voices register on characters who are then filled with inspiration and a restored will. Braun very carefully

modulated the poetic voices of the dream scenes and established a mood and rhythm for them by pitching all the voices in a "soft, lyrical key."[23] In a sense these scenes became a hushed drama of inner voices, of souls calling to one another across time and space.

Kasperowicz also feels that Braun found a very coherent and unifying style that held the whole production together, not only vertically in the various planes of reality, but horizontally in the strong through-line of the play's action. The play is divided into three acts, and Braun translated them into three relentlessly progressive movements. The first movement was the wedding reception itself, which he treated completely as a flirtatious, tipsy, self-dramatizing "game" (zabawa) of love and romantic fantasy. Stimulated by the festive atmosphere and alcohol, the guests began to play out a kind of theatre of wish-fulfillment that prepared them to receive the dream visitations of the second act. Following the second act of soft, dreaming encounters with half-remembered visions of the past, Braun staged the third act as a massive, collective "hangover" (kac). There was "no wedding, no poetry." Braun stripped away all evocation of place, class, and history by transforming the characters into one "huge, general, national heap," to use Kasperowicz's lumpenly apt phrase.[24]

Across a long horizontal beam on the set Braun had inscribed the dates 1901-1965, and through the final act he

connected the past to the present. He had wanted to deposit the play in the laps of his audience, and let them make of it what they would. To sum up the success of Braun's production, Kasperowicz quotes from a review of a 1918 production written by Karol Irzykowski: "'The actors play as if they were a part of the audience extended onto the stage . . .'"[25] In his next productions of Wyspiański Braun would go even further in his attempt to bring the playwright into the public arena of everyday life. By doing this he would help encourage a bold, new tradition in the staging of Wyspiański.

Although the plays of Wyspiański, like those of the romantics, began to be staged regularly and with great inventiveness during the 1960s, they were revered chiefly for their potent, visionary form and extraordinary range of poetic styles. But as the decade progressed and political events gathered steam, Wyspiański underwent a gradual reappraisal, especially after the Growtowski-Szajna production of his Akropolis in 1962, set in Auschwitz, and the centenary of the poet's birth in 1969. His plays began to be investigated for their sharp, satirical comments and insight into contemporary events and historical crises in Poland in the sixties and seventies. Wyspiański's plays became eloquent models of the mechanism of historical change and the collision of political forces. In his own productions of November Night in 1967 and Deliverance in 1972, Braun

attempted to hold Wyspiański's sweeping historical vision up as a dark mirror of the current times in which the Poles would confront themselves as a nation and face the challenge of their collective destiny. Wyspiański would act as an open challenge to the Poles to see if they had what it took to re-enter their own history and change its course.

Far more than The Wedding, November Night dissects the specific historical causes of a devastating national fiasco and failure of collective will. And although, like The Wedding, the play freely mingles historical, legendary, and even mythological beings on the stage who elevate it to a plane of mystical portentousness, Braun intended his production of it to make history repeat itself, as it were, by drawing clear and disturbing parallels between the horrors of November 29, 1830 and the rising tide of the political struggles of the present day (1967). As a vision of history, the production was, Braun admits, his most consciously "monumental" and ironically spectacular staging of a play that dealt so directly with historical and national issues.[26] The production was the result of a fortuitous convergence of time, place, and unique opportunity. It was an opportunity for Braun to create a national "spectacle" out of the raw material of one of Poland's great historical catastrophes.

Braun was commissioned to direct November Night as part of Theatre Wybrzeże's inaugural season in its newly constructed theatre complex in the Coal Market Place in Gdańsk. During the 1960s Theatre Wybrzeże established a strong reputation as a theatre which combined two visions that are difficult to reconcile. As Bożena Frankowska says, "It is popular, and retains high artistic standards."[27] In its artistic program the theatre maintained a balance between tradition and innovation. Although the theatre is located on the northern coast of Poland, it provides stimulating and sophisticated theatre for a wide region of the country. In 1966 a new theatre was built in order to better facilitate Wybrzeże's role as an exciting, contemporary theatre. The entire plant was designed to allow "rapid scene changes, assuring actor/audience contact, modern lighting and sound." Plans published by Ryszard Kowalski in his article in the June, 1965 issue of Theatre in Poland reveal a modern, streamlined theatre that is both intimate and splendidly equipped.[28] Its chief innovation was a semicircular forestage that reached out nearly to the edge of the front row of seats. The small auditorium of 700 seats allowed everyone in the theatre to "enjoy excellent visibility and audibility." The large stage was equipped with an enormous electronic revolve. The theatre seemed made, literally, for Braun and November Night.

Braun had had an ongoing relationship with Theatre Wybrzeże in the 1960s. He had staged successful productions of Mrożek's Striptease, Out at Sea, and Charlie, Pirandello's Tonight We Improvise, and Brecht's Caucasian Chalk Circle, among others. He was given a free artistic hand and ample subsidization for the production of November Night. He shifted the focus of the action of the play away from the major historical figures and onto the platoon of young military cadets who were led by their commander, Piotr Wysocki, in insurrection against the Czar. Because of the lavish financial support, Braun was able to hire and train forty young actors and acting students to play the cadets. They were trained (both as actors and as soldiers) to become a tightly-knit, dedicated corps, and to create an absolutely authentic sense of military life. The production was divided into four major units of action which closely followed the tragic progress of the forty cadets from initial exuberance and commitment through to the final passage of the massacred cadets into eternity, led by the fertility goddess Demeter and her daughter Persephone. The production opened on May 27, 1967.

The action of the play begins in and around the vicinity of the royal Łazienki Park in Warsaw on the night of November 29, 1830. In the courtyard of the School for Cadets the platoon of raw, young recruits is being galvanized into an insurrectionary force by Commander Wysocki as

they stand beneath the statue of the great King John Sobieski, who miraculously defeated the Turks at the seige of Vienna in 1683. A montage of scenes follows which reveals the vacillation and uncertainty of the other major historical figures who helped to instigate the uprising. They include its presumptive leader General Chłopicki; the historian and political radical Joachim Lelewel; and Prince Adam Czartoryski, an aristocrat and politician who dreams of becoming king himself. In large part the production directed its scorn at this older generation of intellectuals and self-styled national leaders who betrayed the energy, courage, and faith of the younger generation of soldiers, students, and idealists. These early scenes provided a tragic counterpoint to the rising emotional tide of the uprising.

The second major unit of action in the production portrayed in great detail the preparations and movement of the platoon of forty cadets as they approached the center of Warsaw to engage the Czar's cannons and cavalry. To achieve this mounting sense of mass movement and imminent confrontation Braun made use of the huge revolve in the stage floor to allow the cadets to march, halt, and march again <u>en masse</u> without ever leaving the stage. Scenes involving the other major historical characters and the Greek goddesses were played around the perimeter of the stage. Braun captured something of the magnificent and absurd spectacle of young

men marching heroically to nowhere as the revolve ground slowly on its axis.

The march ended in a bloody massacre in the center of Warsaw where the cadets faced down the barrels of Russian guns. Braun staged this climactic scene as a deliberate "quote" of a scene that has been played out again and again in Polish history. In this "scene" a platoon of doomed soldiers suffers an utterly reckless and inspiring martyrdom at the hands of savage invaders. One of the most infamous of these recurring scenes of bloodshed was a battle in the autumn of 1939 in which a cavalry brigade attempted to charge through a line of German Panzers. The men were slaughtered. Such actions of futile defiance lie at the heart of every debate about Polish national destiny, especially since some of these reckless campaigns have been, at critical moments in Polish history, miraculously successful. Some even argue that the very survival of Poland as a nation depends on just such flagrant acts of heroic resistance to oppressive tyranny.

Braun's intention in the scene was clear. He wished simply to demonstrate that these courageous young cadets, in the flush of exuberant youth, had been fed by their ineffectual leaders to the Russian guns, and that the immediate cost to Poland was the utter waste of fresh and hopeful young lives. He staged the scene to recall, irresistibly, the doomed charge of 1939. He had placed toward the back of

the stage a long, low platform that extended across the full width of the stage.

On this platform he had placed a line of three massive and authentically reproduced Russian cannons. These guns pointed directly out toward the audience. Braun employed a brilliant designer, Ali Bunsch, to design both sets and costumes. In addition to the cannons, Bunsch created exact replicas of nineteenth century Polish infantry uniforms for the cadets to wear. Each uniform, down to the buttons, boots, and medals, was thoroughly researched and meticulously reproduced.

Braun used all the available space of Theatre Wybrzeże for this terrifying scene, including a series of steps that were constructed to descend from the stage floor to the floor of the auditorium. These semicircular steps reached to the feet of the spectators. The set design duplicated this set of steps on the stage. They ascended from the stage floor to the low platform on which sat the Russia guns. The entire stage floor was painted a uniform dark grey, and a huge grid of white lines defined and outlined the space in a geometrically precise and abstract pattern. This abstracted space subtly connected the stage and the auditorium, and it was possible, in effect, to walk from the auditorium up a series of steps and wide plateaus directly to the level of the artillery. As the massacre progressed, cadets fell and littered the stage, and their bodies lay

sprawled at grotesque angles down the steps of the forestage right to the feet of the audience.

It was not Braun's intention simply to stage a gruesome historical pageant that depicted the tragic squandering of the life and dreams of Poland's youth. His production combined a meticulous realism with a much more generalized abstraction (epitomized by the set) of the historical moment of this November night. Like The Wedding, November Night is surrounded and permeated by a mythological and metaphysical dimension that lifts the play to a plane of universal, even mystical, destiny. Interwoven through the historical scenes are scenes involving a struggle among the Greek goddesses of war, chaos, and death--the Nikes, and the goddess Athena. Opposing them is Ares, the god of war frenzy and the embodiment of Russia and the Czar. Although Braun trimmed many of these mythological scenes to concentrate on the historical action, he did retain some of them and gave them a clear and compelling meaning within the action.

The first scene that Wyspiański wrote for the play (three years before the completion of the rest of the drama) was a farewell scene between the goddess Demeter and her daughter, the corn-maiden Persephone. These female figures of fertility, death, and rebirth became the genesis of the entire drama, and they lift the play beyond a specific Polish destiny to include a universal pattern of death and resurrection in which Poland plays a vital part. Although

Persephone willingly descends to the underworld to become the bride of Pluto, she pledges that she will one day return to life. This mythological plane closely parallels and often impinges on the historical action of the play.

In the fourth and final scene of the production these two planes of historical and mythological action converged and united into one vision through which Braun tried to crystallize the import of the play for his audience. In the final mythological scene of Wyspiański's text the souls of the recent dead meet for one last time before making their final journey to Hades. Braun had several of the Greek goddesses, including Demeter and Persephone, come on-stage and raise up the cadets who had just fallen in battle. Together they sang "lyrical laments and heartrending threnodies"[29] as the goddesses lead the cadets into eternity. But Persephone offered a final prophecy: "I shall resuscitate, raise from the dead the great sons/One day you will be free!".[30] 1968 was only a year away and Braun's production of November Night was intended as a clear message from the younger generation to their elders.

More than that, the production expressed a defiant note of confidence and perhaps optimism in the midst of waste and death that would become characteristic of much of Braun's later work, in particular his work with Poland's most unregenerate skeptic and anti-idealist, Tadeusz Różewicz. That optimism would find its strongest expression in the

universal myth that lay at the heart of Wyspiański's play and at the heart of Braun's own spiritual devotion as a Catholic--the myth of resurrection. For Braun the theatre was the ideal place to effect such a resurrection, since the theatre, as the embodiment of consciousness, could undermine and collapse its own decayed structures and break through the barriers of petrified thought, rigid ideologies, and empty theatrical conventions. A new theatre and a new order of spiritual life could be created, but to do so it would be necessary to pull down the old mythic structures, and eventually even the actual walls of the theatre building, to allow the actors and spectators to meet on common ground.

Zygmunt Greń took advantage of his opportunity to review November Night to engage in a long and fiercely polemical argument that called into question, not only Braun's attempt to use the play as a model of the mechanism of Polish history, but also Braun's whole generation of young directors, whom Greń describes as belonging to the school of the "sober skeptic" (trzeźwego sceptyka).[31] The ethos of this "new wave" (nowej fali) of directors, which has been discussed in the preceding paragraphs, did make a vital contribution to Polish theatre and Polish life in the fifties and early sixties, according to Greń, by opening the eyes of the nation to the naivete and phony optimism promulgated by the philosophy of socialist realism in the service of Marxist utopianism. But Greń suggests that perhaps the

time has come to focus on new hope and fresh ideas in order to begin creating a real sense of national identity in which Poles could invest their faith and trust. Exposing the sins of the past and apportioning guilt for the failure of the November insurrection was becoming, according to Gren', a kind of thwarted romantic utopianism which sought to castigate the Polish conscience for failing to rise to the occasion and meet the demands of the "moment."

Gren' argues persuasively that the aggressive contemporizing of Polish theatre by this "new wave" of directors, particularly through the restaging of the classics, demonstrates a naivete and phony optimism of its own by suggesting that if the stupidity or arrogance of certain individuals (such as Wysocki, Lelewel, or Chłopicki) could have been avoided or overcome at a critical "moment," history might have taken a very different course. Gren' maintains that this attitude of fixing moral blame for Poland's historical predicament betrays the sin of "believing in the justice of history,"[32] which causes people to believe that if history is about to repeat itself they must be, and can be, prepared to win victory this time around. While Gren' would agree with Braun that Wyspianski is using the action of November Night to attack many of the excessive romantic notions that derive from dreams of millenialism and an addiction to the "moment," he strenuously disagrees with Braun's suggestion in the production (as Gren' perceived it) that history might

have had, and possibly could have had, a different and more glorious outcome. Will "the moment" come again in 1970, or 1976, or 1980?

In his review Gren argues that Wyspiański built the action of his drama around the myth of the goddesses of fertility, death, and rebirth, not in order to suggest that Poland will one day be miraculously reborn but to elevate the play itself to the level of inspiring tragedy. Wyspiański was not a journalist intervening in history, but a tragic poet. Gren calls the play a "tragedy of futile necessity," which uses the imponderable workings of history as a modern manifestation of the Greek concept of fate. The insurrection must be seen, according to Gren, as a collision of national will seeking self-realization in independence, and the "perfectly passionless laws of existence."[33] Wyspiański used the inspiration of Greek mythology and tragedy to expand his vision of the play to include a "global human perspective,"[34] and not to chart a specific mystical destiny for Poland which history would somehow one day validate.

Whether one conceives of November Night as a historical, national, or metaphysical tragedy, Braun still faced the difficulty in 1967 of overcoming the predisposition of the contemporary audience in Poland to indulge in collective displays of nationalistic fervor and romantic emotionalism. A sharp irony cuts through the rich tapestry of Wyspiański's

artistic recreation of Polish history, and whether that irony is interpreted as tragically or historically determined it must undercut the spectacular pageantry of the insurrection. This Braun tried to do by marshalling all his creative forces to stage a "patriotic spectacle"[35] and at the same time undermine it. This, according to Gren's review, proved to be a much harder task than even Braun had anticipated.

In one of his few remarks that deal directly with the production, Gren describes the audience response to the spectacle of young heroes marching gloriously to their death. As the cadets marched endlessly across and around the stage on their way to the center of Warsaw, the audience cheered and wildly applauded. Unfortunately the cheers and applause continued even as the cadets were massacred by Russian guns. Rather than responding with stunned and shameful silence to this "spectacle" of foolish heroism and destructive naivete, the audience chose instead to add their own blind patriotic support to it. But given this response by the audience, one could argue that Braun should have in fact gone further toward making history a living reality in November Night, although it is difficult to imagine how that might have been accomplished other than by putting real ammunition in the Russian guns and firing over the heads of the spectators.

It should be mentioned that Braun has a quite different recollection of the response to his young cadets. He admits that the audience cheered wildly for them as they marched in their handsome uniforms to meet their destiny. This, he argues, was precisely his strategy. As the massacre progressed, a dead silence slowly fell over the auditorium, and it was not until the end of the performance that the spectators again joined in an ovation. It must also be mentioned that, despite the tepid reviews, the production played to full houses for twenty performances, after which it was suddenly cancelled. This was the first production directed by Braun to be removed from the repertoire by the authorities. The reasons given were that the production would stir up anti-Soviet feeling, and was in fact blatantly anti-Soviet in spirit. Braun does not disagree.

Whether it is true that Polish theatre needed to move beyond the "sober skepticism" of post-Stalinist reevaluation in the sixties is of course debatable, but it is undeniable that Wyspiański continued to exert a profound influence on directors as the decade progressed. And that this poet-playwright continued to offer an exceedingly sobering way of looking at the political and historical realities in Poland can be attested to by the fact that his play Deliverance yielded some of the most exciting and revealing productions in Poland in the early seventies. As Elżbieta Wysińska says, Deliverance "became something of a running commentary

on current affairs" in productions by Adam Hanuszkiewicz, Jan Maciejowski, and later Konrad Swinarski, whose production in 1974 was a major theatrical event.[36] Completely devoid of the mythological plane through which both The Wedding and November Night manifest a supra-historical and cosmic dimension, Deliverance stands as Wyspiański's most bitter denunciation of the national sin of romantic dreaming, as well as his most unsparing examination of the fate of the artist in modern society who tries to break through that veil of illusion only to find himself thrashing blindly in the surrounding emptiness, swallowed up by the vacuum of meaninglessness.[37]

Braun's own production of Deliverance was the last staging of a Wyspiański play that he would undertake in Poland. He staged the play at the Osterwa Theatre in Lublin in 1972 where he had been Artistic Director for five years. The play is above all theatre "stripped down to its essentials,"[38] as Tymon Terlecki describes it, and Braun staged it as his most extreme statement of "theatre-within-the-theatre location." He produced Deliverance after his staging of Różewicz's The Interrupted Act as an in-progress rehearsal of the text (See Chapter IV). He envisioned this production also as an improvisational rehearsal in which a company of actors, lead by an actor/director who assumes the role of Konrad, attempts to conceive and create a theatrical

framework for a production of Deliverance, using the available facilities of Osterwa Theatre, its props, and pieces of costume lying around the stage.

Deliverance was the ideal play to fulfill the need of a stage action which could be simultaneously an act of creation and also a discussion and examination of that creative act in the context of the current political struggle. The play is essentially a confrontation between the theatre artist and the inspiration and materials of his art. It is also a profound existential confrontation of the artist with himself and with the intolerable burden of his destiny as an artist in Poland. A director of this play must confront, in the figure of Konrad, his alienation within his own society, and also the possible absurdity of creating art in a world where history sucks the meaning out of human life. Konrad has entered this empty theatre bound in chains to create "a new theatre and present the nation in it."[39]

Deliverance is also a drama of ideas, according to Tymon Terlecki, an intense intellectual debate in the spirit of Ibsen or Shaw. The play is loaded with polemical speeches as figures of contemporary culture and society argue with Konrad about the value of art, political action, and the meaning of the past. Braun stripped the play down to its raw conflict--a war of ideas concerning the destiny of Poland. He eliminated a long series of scenes and vignettes called "Contemporary Poland" which embodies

Wyspiański's bitter satirical attack on the present state of Polish society. Braun focused instead on the second act, in which Konrad engages hallucinatory figures, called simply "Masks," in a passionate debate about the role of the artist in an enslaved nation. Braun transposed the intellectual debate between Konrad and the Masks into a theatrical debate between the director (played by Zbigniew Górski) and his company of actors about the kind of production they should create out of the material of the play Deliverance. And the debate about the kind of production they should create inevitably became indistinguishable from the debate about the kind of theatre they should attempt to make in response to the current political situation.

Braun's staging of the production also stripped the performance down to its barest improvisational essentials, and eliminated any vestige of theatrical magic or illusionism. Wyspiański calls for a set to be constructed for the performance on the bare stage of the theatre. It is to represent a centuries-old cathedral that stands next to Wawel Castle. But the only set piece used by Braun in his production was a simple prop pulpit, which, in its bare simplicity, also strongly suggested a podium for a political rally or forum. Braun had originally wanted the pulpit to be painted bright red, for obvious reasons, but the authorities immediately censored it. The atmosphere that Braun wanted to create was that of a heated debate in a political

meeting hall. This production became a true "meeting place" where the debate about the form of effective theatre became wedded to the debate about the form of effective political action.

Using the techniques of improvisation and duplicating the methods of a rehearsal process, the actors discussed and experimented with different methods of creating characters and scenes, using bits of costumes and props scattered about the stage. As he had done in his production of The Interrupted Act two years earlier, Braun combined the methods of improvisational theatre with discussion and analysis of that process. In his most aggressive attack on illusionism Braun "alienated" the entire production by bringing the theatrical spirit of Wyspiański himself onto the stage of the Osterwa Theatre. In the play, Konrad's most powerful and feared adversary from the past is "the Poet," who represents Mickiewicz, the transfigured presence of the entire romantic movement. Braun created a mock-effigy of Wyspiański by having the role of "the Poet" bare a striking resemblance to a character from The Wedding: the "Hogel," which is actually a straw covering used to protect rose bushes in winter. He appears at the end of the play to lead the characters in a slow, somnambulistic dance. He is a figure of dreaming and reverie, and helps the wedding guests forget their failed insurrection. Some critics suggest that the Hogel is Wyspiański. Through this bit of theatrical irony Braun seemed to

be saying that to be faithful to Wyspiański and his play it would be necessary to exorcise him, just as Wyspiański had to exorcise Mickiewicz.

Although Deliverance embodies a struggle with the forces of tradition and the temptation of poetry that impinge on Konrad, the real struggle that lies at the heart of the play is internal. It is a struggle to free the will of the poet from his own demons of romantic fantasy and poetic reverie. As Konrad says, "He who is delivered by his own will, shall live to see the day of Deliverance."[40] I have included this brief description of Braun's production of Deliverance as an illustration of how far he was determined to go in his attempt to crack the poetic and political husk of an acknowledged classic and strip it of its theatrical baggage. In this sense he could go no further. He had stripped Wyspiański down to a single podium and a troupe of actors in an empty theatre.

The production is also a point of departure for him. Gradually Braun was attempting to wean himself from the charms of the staging theatre, and to evolve his productions beyond any dependency on stage design. This does not mean that he wanted eventually to do away with mise-en-scène in his theatre, but rather to integrate it as a coactive component of the whole action of theatre. He needed to find a way to re-theatricalize space so that it would cease to be a medium of mesmerization and begin to act as a goad to

consciousness, forcing spectators to engage the performance on a personal level and treat it as raw material for the reconstruction, or the rehabilitation, of thought, imagination, and communal power.

To this extent the production was a very personal statement about Braun's need to forge his own artistic conscience, and deliver himself, like Konrad, "by his own will." During the first decade of his work Braun directed over fifty productions in Poland both for stage and television. He directed both Polish and foreign plays, classics as well as contemporary dramas. He was determined to establish himself and make his mark as an exciting and innovative director working within the mainstream theatre. But he also was determined to forge his own vision of what that the theatre might be, and how he could reconstruct it to embrace a nation that was rapidly coming to feel the pressures of unsettling historical change.

It would not be an easy thing to do. The figure of Konrad does not set an easy or reassuring example. He ends his own struggle alone in an empty theatre thrashing blindly in the darkness. He bears the mark of Orestes and Oedipus--both parent killers, killers of tradition. To attempt, like Konrad/Wyspiański, to banish poetry from the stage would require more than a supreme exertion of will. It would require the rejection of the entire tradition of literature and of staging theatre productions inherited from

Mickiewicz, Słowacki, Krasiński, Leon Schiller, Wilam Horzyca, Braun's own beloved mentor Bohdan Korzeniewski, and many others. As the seventies lurched toward political crisis and possible cataclysm, the debate would continue to grow about the cost of this rejection to dramatic literature, to a sense of tradition, and to the preservation, at a time of growing political and social pressure, of transcendent cultural values. Not only Braun, but the whole "open" theatre movement, would come under harsh criticism for failing to replace the traditions it had rejected with a new or reconstituted vision of national greatness.[41] In its search for timeliness, topicality, and direct impact, the "open" theatre had (so some argued) violated the sacred gods of a revered literary tradition, had broken down the barriers between performers and spectators, and even abandoned the proscenium stage and in some instances the theatre building itself. Some critics would include in the definition of "open" theatre, not only the radical theatre collectives and student theatres, but the whole new wave of post-war directors who drew inspiration from non-traditional forms of staging to mount the classics. By virtue of its anti-traditional, anti-formalist creative principles, this new movement, even by its broadest definition, could not, and would not, build a new tradition of great literature.

Braun did not abandon literature in the seventies, however. Indeed, his most successful and critically

acclaimed productions of the decade were of texts written by men who were widely recognized as consummate, if highly unorthodox, wielders of language: Tadeusz Różewicz and James Joyce. In fact, E. J. Czerwinski, a long-time critic of Polish theatre and drama, has argued that it was Braun's devotion to great literature and rich poetic language that separated him from many of the other practitioners of the "open theatre," and enabled him to construct such visually rich theatrical worlds.[42] The poetry of literature possesses an indelible fixity on the page that tends toward abstraction. But the poetry of theatre acquires a certain density and resonance when it is released into the space of performance, and it was this poetry of the theatre that Braun tried to create in the next stage of his work.

In the seventies Braun would substitute a concrete poetry of objects theatrically charged and sharply juxtaposed for a poetry of words finely ordered and reverently contemplated. Braun's first encounter with Różewicz in 1970 proved that poetry, whether sublimely or crudely conceived, is first of all a living force of consciousness, and when that force is set loose in a theatre it can demolish all before it. To construct this new form of theatre, inspired in great part by Różewicz, Braun harnessed the power latent in all great poetry: the power of metamorphosis. Through the creative action of metamorphosis, Braun would attempt to restore the transformative power of theatre to re-envision,

and so to recreate, reality in the minds, and hearts, of his audience.

CHAPTER IV:

DEMOLISHING SPACE WITHIN THE THEATRE SPACE

Braun was appointed Artistic Director of the Osterwa Theatre in Lublin for the 1967-68 season. Although he had been offered similar positions by theatres in some of the smaller provincial cities in Poland, such as Jelenia Gora, he waited until a position such as the one in Lublin became available. The advantages, which have already been cited, were many. The city boasted a large metropolitan population, a major university, and a heady atmosphere of youthful activism, intellectual ferment, and artistic experiment. Braun's reputation had grown rapidly as a young, adventurous, and ambitious director with a professed commitment to new ideas. He was appointed because of that commitment to recharge a theatre which in the mid-sixties had begun to slip into a period of artistic conventionalism and flagging audience enthusiasm. To a large extent Braun fulfilled his mandate for Osterwa Theatre in his first three years as its Artistic Director.[1] By 1970, he had firmly established himself in Lublin as a director with clear ideas about the direction in which he intended to take his new theatre in the coming years.

Braun welcomed the opportunity awaiting him at Osterwa because he anticipated that the power of his new position and the consequent directorial authority would give him both the stability and the freedom to pursue his own program for the theatre. He arrived in Lublin fully intent on pursuing his ideas about a fresh and engaging approach to performance that would more actively involve his audience as participants. But even with his growing reputation and confidence as a director, he would find it surprisingly difficult to break new ground in his work.

In his first three years in Lublin Braun succeeded in establishing himself as a highly respected director, staging successful but relatively traditional productions for an enthusiastic but relatively traditional audience. He had not been cautious in his work, but he had not been as bold and adventurous as he had been with other individual productions such as those he had directed in Toruń or Gdańsk. It was of course a much more rigorous task to steer, not only one's own career, but an entire theatre and its audience in a new direction. He did continue to investigate both native Polish and western theatre traditions, both the classic and modern repertoire. He directed Norwid's Caesar and Cleopatra, Hamlet, and Brecht's Mother Courage in 1968, and Miller's All My Sons in 1969. By 1970 Braun had succeeded in revitalizing the theatre's audience, returning the theatre to a level of sustained excellence in production, and

establishing his own credentials as a strong and confident Artistic Director.

Despite his ambitions for his theatre and for himself, Braun began to feel "stuck, trapped," after only his first year in Lublin, by the demands of running a major state repertory theatre and maintaining a consistent level of artistic success and popular appeal. (In many respects the problems Braun faced are universal in the professional theatre.) He became determined to find a playwright who would "force" him to break through the walls of convention and respectability that were imprisoning his theatrical vision, and explore new territory in the relationship between his theatre and his audience in Lublin.[2] His specific goal was to open his theatre up to that audience, and to invite them to share, not only in the performance of theatre, but in the actual creation of it.

Tadeusz Różewicz was the inevitable choice to help Braun break through the prison walls of convention. Known and highly respected as a poet after the war, Różewicz began to establish himself in the 1960s as the most theatrically anarchic and intellectually difficult playwright in Poland. His plays, some of which are actually intensely envisioned theatrical scenarios, are all to some extent based on a rejection of the entire tradition of Aristotelian dramaturgy and illusionistic scenery. Różewicz challenges not only theatrical form, but all abstractions and ideals that mask

the intensely private and painful epiphanies of individual human lives in the name of a higher, and more exalted Humanity. He constantly subverts and undermines his own dramatic structures, and mocks the
pretensions of a theatre that purports to display "real" life in all its infinite pain, uncertainty, and excruciating subjectivity by slickly packaging it in well-made structures and enchanting theatrical forms.[3]

Understandably, most criticism of Różewicz has tended to focus on his sardonic wit, his derision of the grand traditions of art and culture, and his determined and systematic dismantling of traditional theatrical forms. But there is an equally powerful force at work in Różewicz's plays, although it may seem to find only oblique or very tentative expression. That force is an inconsolable pity for humanity which manifests itself, as Józef Kelera describes it, in a relentless search to "restitute" the value of human life and rediscover what is "certain and unimpeachable" in it.[4] Kelera locates the source of Różewicz's abhorrence of all ideals and abstractions in his experiences as a soldier in the Home Army during the Second World War where he witnessed a barbarism and contempt for humanity that had been institutionalized by Hitler and Stalin in the name of world conquest. Although it is possible to detect only the faintest heartbeat of hope buried under the layers of contempt and bitterness in Różewicz's plays, it is

nevertheless there. And Braun not only detected that hope but extracted it and transformed it in his theatre into, one hesitates to say, a bold optimism about humanity and its chances for survival and restitution, even in a world that has been reduced to huge, growing avalanche of garbage (the setting for Różewicz's The Old Woman Broods).[5]

Because if Różewicz's plays are obsessed by death and decay, they are equally concerned with the act of birth and the power of regeneration. (The Old Woman does conceive a child, a beautiful young man who is a poet.) Through his early work with Różewicz, Braun began to conceive of theatre as a kind of incubator of consciousness for his audience in which the autonomy of imagining could be reborn and reconstituted. And through this rebirth, the autonomy of the inner life of the individual and the spiritual life of the community might be restored. Braun saw Różewicz's contempt for abstraction and his methodical desecration of forms and structures as a necessary, and vital, stage in the reconstitution of human creativity. Theatre would serve as a living model of the act of spiritual metamorphosis in which both the power of individual consciousness and the power of community could be restored. In Braun's theatre reality would be torn asunder and then reconstructed out of its own wreckage. To do so it would be necessary first to shatter the sacred vessels of art and culture that the monumental theatre reified, and tear down the sacred temple of

spectacle and magnificent illusion that kept Braun's theatre and the imagination of his audience in thrall. Różewicz would supply the instrument of that destruction.

Różewicz had written several plays in the sixties which had been given very successful productions, and which would have served very well as a powerful instrument of assault on the whole romantic and monumental theatre tradition in Poland. They include The Card Index, The Old Woman Broods, and He Went Out. Braun chose instead a lesser known piece that Różewicz had written in 1964, but which had never been given a professional production. It is easy to understand why it had not reached the stage. The Interrupted Act is not a play as such, but a brief, part-discursive, part-theatrical examination of a few brief, isolated moments of action that have been extracted from the tragically entangled lives of several individuals, including an Engineer, his daughter, and their housekeeper.[6]

The text of The Interrupted Act is a record of Różewicz's inner struggle to tell the story of these intertwined lives, even as he is faced with the impossibility of doing so within the restrictive, cause-and-effect structure of a play. Halina Filipowicz calls the text "an intense, cerebral scenario,"[7] and as in his later theatrical vision Birth Rate, this scenario is the record of a brooding act of consciousness that includes a description of certain scenes or events in the prospective play; a discourse on the

pretensions of the traditional theatre to tell this story; and very explicit and detailed stage directions that Różewicz states must be obeyed in any production of the play. These stage directions and digressive remarks which continually "interrupt" the dramatic action take up fully two-thirds of the text. Some of the directions set down exact specifications for staging the play, while others offer a director great freedom to choose the exact length of certain actions, colors of costumes, and possible methods of staging various scenes in different theatrical styles.

In many of the stage directions Różewicz demands that a staging of the play obey the logic of life as opposed to the logic of theatre. This is the scenario's central argument. The story of these individual lives which have become intricately and tragically entangled cannot be put on the stage without violating the integrity of those lives. Różewicz describes elements of the physical environment such as "three strands of white hair lying on a shelf," or a fly sitting on a lump of sugar, as essential and integral parts of the story, but which an audience cannot possibly see.[8] The real "drama" of this story is too brief, personal, and undetectable to be displayed in the contrived artifice of the theatre. As Różewicz says in his initial "Stage Directions and Remarks," ". . . the Engineer is in fact experiencing a great drama, but alas, this we cannot see."[9] He remains behind the locked door of his study through the

entire action of the play and never appears. Różewicz describes these moments of "great drama" as his "invisible theatre," which reaches beyond language, story, and thrilling action to capture those tragic epiphanies of a single human life that can only find expression in mute suffering, dislocated bits of poetic exclamation, or sudden flashes of shocking self-disclosure.[10]

The central paradox of The Interrupted Act is that Różewicz has fashioned an intensely dramatic "action" out of his complete failure to write a drama. The "act" that is interrupted is the sexual act between the Engineer and his Nurse behind the locked doors of his study; the action of the play itself as it unfolds; and the act of consciousness--of Różewicz's own mind--as it struggles to gain control of the myriad facts, sensations, bits of dialogue, and sudden thoughts that invade and range across it. Różewicz argues that there is simply too much "drama" in even the most inconsequential events and fleeting sensations that strike and penetrate our inner lives, and to twist that living drama into the constricted shape of an Aristotelian plot is a kind of public execution. The life-blood and breath of Różewicz's (or anyone's) consciousness is slowly strangulated by the constrictions of time, place, and action demanded by theatre. Once on the stage, all that remains of his fluid, shifting thoughts is a trussed carcass of a play, an inert effigy of the original vital life of his mind.

Różewicz's theatre might more appropriately be called an "infinitesimal" rather than an "invisible" theatre, because he believes that those disconnected and fleeting moments of our private lives speak with a more genuine eloquence and possess more theatrical power than the colossal actions and charged rhetoric of traditional drama. He turns traditional theatre on its head by arguing in The Interrupted Act that sometimes "a tiny hole may be more dramatic than a hole in heaven. I personally do not ignore even a hole in cheese. . . . You see a huge stage with a hole in heaven, while I am satisfied with a hole in a sock."[11] But it is through these tiny holes, or fissures, in reality that the consciousness of the theatrical poet slips in to discover the intimate drama of lost souls who struggle to restore an image of themselves in the dark glass of a modern world that has been fractured into a thousand tiny, distorted images.

The basic "story" that Różewicz outlines and for which he provides such detailed stage directions and bits of dialogue is actually a perfunctory domestic conflict that could have been shaped into a very good play by Ibsen, Chekhov, Miller, or any one of a number of skilled craftsmen of modern realism. The scenario involves the imminent separation of an Engineer, a builder of bridges, and his Daughter, who is about to leave for America. The Daughter wishes first to speak to her father, who sits in his study with his

Nurse. (She is helping him recuperate from a broken leg.) The door of the study is never opened, even though at one point the Daughter pounds furiously on it to reach her father. The Daughter, who enters the stage carrying a suitcase, should provide the emotional catalyst for a climactic scene of violent confrontation, confession, and perhaps mutual remorse. But her father never appears. For the scene to "work" in the theatre, the Daughter would have to meet the Housekeeper as she enters the living room. The Housekeeper would ask probing questions of the Daughter in order to provide the audience with subtle and much-needed exposition about her departure for America, her split with her father, and other family secrets. But unfortunately, the Housekeeper comes into the room too late, and the Daughter leaves for America without revealing anything about herself to the audience.

When the Housekeeper does enter the room, moments too late, she asks of no one in particular, "God, what's happening here?". But since nothing is, she proceeds to eat several lumps of sugar from the bowl on the table in a slow, deliberate, mundane ritual. She then reads aloud a note that the Daughter has left on the table explaining her sudden departure. The Housekeeper cries despondently, "What's to be done, now?" At that moment Różewicz bursts in with his most explosive "interruption" and launches into an extended description of possible stagings of the next

potential unit of action, which would have the Engineer and his Nurse enter the room together. He describes their entrance in several grand and modern theatrical styles, including "avant-garde" and "surrealistic."

But Różewicz suddenly realizes that his "imagination had run amok," and so he quickly returns "to reality. To our performance."[12] The Engineer and the Nurse do not enter. The Housekeeper answers her own question: "What can they be doing in there? Nothing." She then writes a long entry in a diary concerning the Daughter, speaking the words as she writes. She ends the scene by beating two eggs into a "hogel-mogel," a kind of eggnog, which must take, according to Różewicz, exactly "as long as is necessary to beat the eggs."[13] The length of time will vary each night of the performance according to the strength of the actress and the quality of the eggs.

The entirety of the next scene (Scene Three) is devoted to a single, simple action that must be performed in complete silence. A "Stranger," who, as Różewicz admits, "has nothing at all to do with this drama I am presenting to you,"[14] enters the room wearing elegant evening clothes, sits at a table, smokes a cigarette, pours a drink of brandy from a liquor cabinet, and then, after briefly looking around, leaves. Różewicz gives an exhaustive account of this gentleman and how he came to be in this apartment. The stranger's own apartment is an exact duplicate of this one

in every detail, and he has mistaken it for his own. Różewicz discusses the potential in this scene for a "great contemporary comedy," but again no one enters at precisely the right moment to discover and engage the "Stranger" in conversation, so he, like the Daughter, simply leaves the room without having spoken a word.

Scene Four details the climax, or rather anti-climax, of the entire action of The Interrupted Act. The First Deputy Engineer and two Workers enter the apartment with the tragic news that a bridge which the Engineer has designed has collapsed and caused a terrible flood. Together with the Housekeeper they attempt to rouse the Engineer from his study, but again there is no response from behind the locked door. The play ends with the Deputy throwing himself against the door like a battering ram.

On one level Różewicz has written The Interrupted Act as an anti-well-made play. The classical mechanism of the well-made play, popularized by Eugene Scribe, is of course pregnant coincidence. The action builds through the slow accumulation and dramatic intensification of innocuous bits of information and mundane facts. These clues are ingeniously channeled into the irresistible flow of the dramatic action and trigger further actions and revelations. By removing the element of coincidence (a purely artificial, theatrical device) Różewicz has in effect dismantled the whole mechanism of the traditional, representational theatre

which purports to be an accurate model of human action, or interaction. In one sense, Różewicz's scenario fails to be realized as a complete, intact play because his characters keep missing their entrances, or in the case of the Engineer, simply refusing to make them. They enter either too early or too late, or not at all. Różewicz is left with a collection of isolated actions and disconnected stories which adamantly refuse to coalesce into a coherent, sensible action. And so it is in life.

The great irony of this dismantled scenario is that Różewicz retains, and even enhances, the theatrical power of these isolated strands of his story (which are the building blocks of traditional dramaturgy) by refusing to weave them into a logical, cause-and-affect action. As a kind of palpable stage poetry of human life, these scenic non-sequiturs speak far more eloquently of the desolate and inexpressible moments of private experience than the incriminating discoveries and revealing conversations of the traditional theatre of illusion. As Różewicz will later write in Birth Rate, the authentic cry of human life can be captured adequately only in those "moments of silence" that bare themselves beyond the bounds of language. The "invisible theatre" is also a theatre of howling silences. For all its volubility and continual discoursing, The Interrupted Act argues passionately that "drama takes place in silence. In

an ocean of silence." The Daughter, as she pounds frantically on the door of the study with her fists, hears only an "absolute and intolerable silence."[15] The power of these scenes of mute, unmotivated action and dislocated shards of private experience is intensified by the very fact that Różewicz forces them to stand out in bold relief against the dense background of mystery that envelopes the story. As E. J. Czerwinski says of The Interrupted Act in his article "Tadeusz Różewicz and the Jester-Priest Metaphor," "The action and the dialogue is absurd. And yet each seems to be so pregnant with meaning that the illusion of Grand Drama is effected."[16] For Różewicz, the imperceptible white hairs on a shelf, or even a fly on a lump of sugar possess an insistent poetic eloquence that transfixes his imagination.

Despite its constant interruptions and sardonic subversions, The Interrupted Act does possess a genuinely compelling momentum and a keen sense of suspense. It is finally Różewicz's own omnivorous consciousness that supplies the "act" with its relentless focus and holds it together. Like the later Birth Rate, it is a model of the act of creation itself as it flows out of Różewicz's mind and seeks to materialize itself in some appropriate dramatic form. But that form would have to be as disruptive, elliptical, and digressive--and as self-conscious--as Różewicz's own thought process. If consciousness is a stream, it is a deep and treacherous one for Różewicz, with hidden currents and

whirlpools in which thought flows back through itself and becomes trapped in countless tiny eddies before reentering the surging current.

Perhaps a more accurate analogy for Różewicz's act of creation is the one he chose himself to describe his art. In The Interrupted Act he calls his form of theatre "a living organism,"[17] which divides itself and multiplies like some protozoic creature endlessly reproducing itself. It feeds on its own life to create life. And to transfer this life to the stage would demand a form as incomplete and as unfinished as Różewicz's streaming consciousness. Braun immediately saw in the text its power to demolish the charmed circle of the proscenium stage. His approach to the play was actually quite simple and direct. He took a drama whose central action is the failed attempt to write a drama, and made out of it a rollicking evening of theatre about the impossibility of making theatre. Braun created an hilariously improvisational, and wittily self-conscious and self-annihilating performance about the inherent inadequacy of theatre to manifest or recreate "real" life on a stage. Just as Różewicz had exposed and dissected the highly intellectual, poetic theatre of his own mind, Braun exposed directly to his audience the diabolical machinery, the entire constructive process, of theatre. He showed his audience that the emperor had no clothes. The production

created "theatre-within-the-theatre" with a vengeance. The veil of the temple of art was rent.

With his production of The Interrupted Act Braun confronted his audience directly for the first time. He openly challenged their expectations, presumptions, and convictions about what they should experience in the theatre. He also invited them to offer suggestions, express opinions, and make judgments about the performance they were watching and, in essence, helping to create. The performance of The Interrupted Act took the audience step by step through the entire process of making theatre--the total transformation of a text into a performance. It began with the initial exploratory discussions between the author and the director, and then proceeded to the first read-through and script analysis with the actors. Next followed a series of actor improvisation to discover the "inner" reality of the characters, design consultations, and more discussion. Braun incorporated several of the possible stagings of the Engineer and Nurse entrance as described in detail by Różewicz, including the "surrealistic" and "avant-garde" styles. The production also "tested" some of Różewicz's other staging suggestions, and then culminated in a wild assembly of this theatrical collage. The entire performance was conducted as a collective, dialectical exploration of the step by step process of making theatre that involved the author, director, designers, actors, technicians, and spectators.

The performance was constantly "interrupted," like Różewicz's text, by discussions, arguments, problems, and suggestions for solutions.

For Braun, the participation of the spectators contributed much more than another instrument to pierce and deflate the pompous seriousness of theatre and the sanctified mystery that surrounds it. The audience injected the crucial element of fresh, spontaneous thought into the performance to realize Różewicz's vision of theatre as a living act of consciousness. Their active presence healed not only the breach between initial creation and final reception, but also the purely conceptual and arbitrary breach between illusion and reality. The participation of the audience, however slight, elevated the performance to a plane of pure "act" where they were no longer forced to accept the role of passive receiver, whose suspension of disbelief must invest the stage action with a transcendent reality it does not inherently possess or deserve. Even the continued interruptions and the breakdown of illusion throughout the evening became part of the collective act of consciousness that thinks with theatre. Like Różewicz's text, the production constantly drew attention to itself, digressed, undermined its own construction, and essentially carried on a dialectical argument with the machinery of its own invention. One of the singular accomplishments of the performance was its success in revealing a crucial and often obscured aspect of

Różewicz's genius, his gift for high intellectual farce and pure theatrical slapstick.[18]

After deciding on The Interrupted Act, Braun spent the next two years constructing a basic scenario while he continued to carry on his other duties as Artistic Director of Osterwa Theatre. In order for any production to pass the censor in Poland, a script must be submitted to the Ministry of Culture for examination and approval. There was a certain irony in presenting a drama that could not be a drama, but Braun submitted a "text" that included an outline of the scenic action, some dialogue, and descriptions of the interaction between the actors and the audience. The script was passed. Rehearsals began early in 1970.

In order to begin at the very beginning of the creative process, Braun added two new characters--the Author and the Director--to Różewicz's text. Although these characters were never identified directly as Różewicz and Braun, much inspiration, and part of the script, was derived from their lives and from their collaborative relationship as it had developed early on while working on the production. Some of the dialogue between the Author and the Director was taken from an interview with Konstantin Puzyna that had been published in the theatre journal Dialog.[19] In this interview Różewicz spoke particularly about his great need to find a "partner" with whom he could work. This first stage of the action in Braun's scenario involved a long, intense

discussion between the Author and the Director about the staging of The Interrupted Act that included comments and suggestions from the audience. The men referred to the actual text, and much of the dialogue was drawn from the "Stage Directions and Remarks" that begin it. Everyone discussed the near-impossibility of staging the text according to the playwright's demanding instructions. This "scene" was "performed" by the Author and the Director on the edge of the empty stage in front of the audience.

The fact that these two theatre artists were never specifically identified as Różewicz and Braun enabled Braun to initiate a very subtle but strategic action, whose theatrical implications grew as the evening progressed. These two theatrical doubles, or surrogates, were all part of the act, so to speak. As with the participation of the audience in the performance, they became part of the act itself, situated in the actual moment of creation as it happened each night. By refusing to pin an exact identity on these two characters and fix their reality apart from the performance, Braun intended to play a kind of Pirandellian game in which the usual separation between the real world of the men and women in the theatre (both actors and spectators) and the illusion they are trying to manufacture and believe in, becomes impossibly convoluted. The two men were real, alive, and present. They were doing exactly what they would do in a real theatre at the beginning of a rehearsal of a

production. But they were also, even as they argued about creating this theatre, already part of that creation. The presence of the spectators and their complicity in the creative act further extended this magic done without mirrors. The whole question of what was real or unreal, illusion or reality, was rendered irrelevant. There was nothing for the audience not to believe in.

The next stage of the performance reduplicated the initial reading of the script to the acting company as they sat around a large table that had been brought on to the center of the stage. This read-through proceeded exactly as it had to, and as it had with many other scripts performed at Osterwa Theatre. The script was read in its entirety, including initial stage directions and remarks, by the Director, played by Tadeusz Borowski. The small sections of dialogue in the text were assigned to, and read by, actors in the company. A discussion then ensued concerning the characters, what scenes might be staged, and what improvisation might be used to develop the action. The designer, Jadwiga Pozą̨kowska (the actual designer, not an actress), sat off to one side of the stage with the Author, played by Zbigniew Górski, and took notes and made sketches of possible stage designs for particular scenes. This creative bull-session became the germinative stage of what would become in performance the process of "collective creation" (zbiorowej twórczość), as Braun described it in "The Theatre of the

Community." Braun divided the scenario of The Interrupted Act into two acts, and the first act was propelled by a kind of wild improvisational spirit as the Director, Author, designer, and actors explored the infinite possibilities for bringing the text to theatrical life on stage. The second act would be taken up with the attempt to actually stage parts of the production.

The next unit of the action of Act I was designed by Braun to bridge the gap, or rather obliterate the distinction, between initial conception and analysis, and eventual enactment. On the still-empty stage the entire acting company and design team of Osterwa Theatre, without the use of sets, costumes, or props, began to sketch out the action of the scenario as it might ultimately be realized. In his initial stage directions Różewicz describes a number of scenes that could be staged about the life of the Engineer prior to the beginning of the "drama" as it was born in his head. These scenes include showing the partial construction of the bridge; the fall from it that caused the Engineer to break his leg; and his meeting with the Nurse at the clinic where he was taken for medical assistance. A number of these preparatory scenes were discussed by the actors and then developed improvisationally. The scenes were ultimately realized in an elaborate and inventive series of pantomimes, making use of the emphatic silence demanded by Różewicz.

At the same time, interspersed with and overlapping these extended improvisations, the designer and the Director began to map out the environment for the production. Technicians, properties crew, and carpenters came on-stage to contribute to the aggressive discussion, to take measurements, and to locate necessary set pieces. Again, the action was carefully choreographed by Braun as a Pirandellian exercise in the merging of illusion and reality. Movement around the stage was precisely staged to create a kind of Keystone Kops farce as the Director and actors stepped over, around, and between the members of the design and production staff. The scene revealed Braun's rapidly maturing control of complex and carefully integrated stage movement, and use of theatrical space. As the pace of the action accelerated the performance became suffused with a kind of manically cerebral theatricality. The act of making theatre became theatre in its purest sense. The scene merged early, rough improvisation and finished choreographed performance in a flawless dance of loosed inspiration and carefully controlled action.

The wild spirit of improvisation with which this scene was suffused revealed a subtle but profound truth about the nature of theatre and about the inherent traps one falls into in attempting to transfer a dramatic text to the stage. This truth became especially pronounced as the actors began to explore the background of the characters of Różewicz's

text. Filling in the biographical "holes" of a character, and recreating scenes from his or her life prior to the beginning of a play, is a standard Stanislavskian exercise in making a character "real" for the actor, and deepening the complex layers of inner reality created by him or her on the stage. This preparatory work by the actors became a living illustration of Różewicz's objection to the theatre which must choke off this wellspring of creativity to neatly package its action. The character's "real" life begins to overflow the bounds of the action as the actor's inspiration plumbs the depths of the character's whole existence.

This extended exploration of the real self of the character necessitates the exploration of the real self of the actor to find that point of identification between actor and character. The heart of the Stanislavsky system is based on the basic precept of "making it real," both in the sense of the reality of the created self (the character) and the real self of the actor. This coincidence of two realities sets off a chemical reaction of inspiration. The actor falls susceptible to the unlimited possibilities to discover life both in the character and in himself. That is to say, everything becomes important. Every impression produces truth; every kernel of experience emerges latent with meaning; and every enactment releases reality. As a being who truly lives on-stage in his real and imagined self, the actor finds that his inspiration, like life, is boundless.

Like Różewicz's text, the theatre cannot hold it without killing it.

But this convergence of the two selves inevitably catches the actor in an act of self-contradiction on the stage. The actor's art, like Różewicz's theatre of the mind, is a "living organism" which feeds on its omnivorous appetite for life and experience. This boundless allegiance to life becomes strangulated by the preposterously strict ordering of events, revelations, and denouements that the traditional theatre must rely on for its cunning affects. As David Mamet says, playwriting is not an art, it's a trick. The theatre exercises an artistic totalitarianism by imposing a scale of acceptable emotional values, appropriately dramatic action, and suitably profound meaning.

Różewicz holds the theatre in contempt because it demands that feeling or experience cannot exist unless it is flagrantly expressed. The theatre not only creates an artificial formal order, but also an artificial hierarchy of emotion. The soul exists only to be bared; private truth is inconsequential. All that the actor discovers in the character and in him or herself, though passionately real, must remain unspoken. Różewicz finds this taste for romantic self-dramatization vulgar and manipulative. In his early remarks in The Interrupted Act he points out that even if he did create a scene between the Engineer and the Daughter in the study, the Engineer would still say nothing because "he

is a very reserved man." His own private drama is no less real or tragic for that. This scene of the rampant collective creation of characters by the actors became a living analogue of Różewicz's own boundless allegiance to life and to creation, and substantiated his contempt for the cunning manipulation of events and emotion by the traditional playwright, whom he calls a "vulgar realist."[20]

Following this scene of improvisation and discussion, the remainder of the first act was taken up with a rehearsal of Scene One in the text. Różewicz provides a script for this scene, which is a long, intensely private and poetic monologue delivered by the Daughter alone on the stage. This scene was the "seed of the whole drama" for Różewicz, and the monologue is written as a dense, almost-ritualistic litany of thought fragments, images, raw feelings, and pure poetic sounds. The speech takes the Daughter through a free-associational labyrinth of disturbing thoughts, vague forebodings, and desperate imaginings. It is a highly condensed and pressurized expression of a "realistico-poetic" theatre that pushes against the bounds of language and verges on that "intolerable silence" where real meaning lies. At the end of this long monologue the Daughter is reduced to a "pile of hair and rags," and she crawls like an animal to the study door. She pounds frantically against it and utters wild inarticulate cries in response to the

silence. After a few moments she rises, picks up her suitcase, and slowly exits in silence.

The staging simply recreated the actual rehearsal process for the scene and, like the actors' improvisations, was located in a kind of limbo world between analysis and enactment, reality and illusion. The scene was quite similar in spirit to a scene in Pirandello's Tonight We Improvise!, which Braun had directed in 1962 at Theatre Wybrzeże. In Pirandello's play, the actor playing the character Penny Whistle "walks through" his own death scene, carefully describing his objectives and his blocking, and at the same time speaking the inner monologue he had created for the scene. Penny Whistle is forced to this action because the director Hinkfuss refuses to give him the cue he requires to die properly, and so he demonstrates the internal and external logic of his own stage death. As he walks through the action he lives his emotional life and its growing intensity, even as he stands outside it. At the moment of his stage-death, the actress playing the Chanteuse is so moved she breaks down in real tears. In the same way the scene with the Daughter built in dramatic intensity as it was rehearsed and shaped. When it was given its final run-through, it became in its stark simplicity on the empty stage a stunning theatrical coup to end the first act in an "ocean of silence" that flowed from the stage through the audience.

The second act of Braun's production kicked into high theatrical gear and returned to the manic comic spirit of the earlier sections of the first act. A basic set for the living room of the Engineer's apartment was erected on-stage, and the scene with the Housekeeper was staged in which she eats the sugar lumps and reads the note from the Daughter. After she cried out, "What is to be done?", the audience was invited to judge several stagings of the next unit of action as Różewicz describes it in the text. They include the "avant-garde" and "surrealistic" stagings of the scene between the Engineer and the Nurse (had they entered the living room of the apartment at the right moment). Braun first staged the scene as a hilarious burlesque of the "monumental" style of theatrical production in which enormous effigies of angels, including Michael the Archangel, descended from the fly system wearing gold armor and carrying fiery swords. The Engineer was pushed onto the stage in a wheelchair with the cast on his foot shaped like some "antediluvian monster." He immediately attacked the Housekeeper who screamed out in Swahili. The same scene was then staged as a mock-surrealistic farce in which the Engineer burst into the room with his chest bared through his unbuttoned dressing gown. He was followed by the Nurse whose shiny, diaphanous uniform was also opened to expose her bare breasts. The scene was laced with a silly eroticism, and Różewicz's absurd dialogue captured the maniacally

conventional speech of an Ionesco play. These scenes were also discussed and restaged with adjustments made at the suggestion of the Author, Director, actors, and the audience.

The next scene, staged with the Housekeeper alone on the stage, also obliterated the conventional separation of illusion and reality, of stage and auditorium. As the Housekeeper prepared the "hogel-mogel," the action, following Różewicz's instructions, was dictated by reality. It took just as long as it took each night. Braun extended the laws of reality for this scene by having the Housekeeper leave the stage and descend into the audience, where she gave individual spectators a taste of the confection. (The spoon was carefully wiped clean after each taste.)

The next scene with the "Stranger" returned the performance to the plane of pure theatrical invention. The audience was again presented with a possible theatrical embellishment of the man's absurd predicament which has him mistakenly enter an apartment that is the precise duplicate of his own. Several replicas of the back wall of the living room set were placed behind it in a false perspective that stretched up and away into the back reaches of the stage. As with the monumental and surrealistic stagings of the previous scene, Braun used theatricality to expose its own redundancy and self-reflexivity. He demonstrated that theatre, which tries to explain or reveal the hidden truth of

life, ultimately violates its profound mystery and inexplicableness. The self-replicating set only served to reveal the theatre's compulsion for illusion and spectacular effects, and to expose its preoccupation, not with the deep truths of life but with shallow displays of its own invention.

The end of the performance presented a critical problem for Braun in that a theatre performance about the impossibility of making theatre could never, by its own inherent logic, end. Braun chose instead to have the performance simply run out of theatrical gas and slip gradually into a state of creative entropy. In the final scene, as the First Deputy called out to the Engineer behind his door about the flood, Braun had all the actors begin to enter the stage as if carried along by a huge slow-motion wave. The angel effigies began to descend slowly from the fly system and hang limply in mid-air. Everything slowly ground to a halt. The stage fell silent and all motion ceased. The Director, seeming distracted and listless, played with a toy bird made of folded newspaper. After a few moments, the actors wandered off the stage. The audience was excused.

The production opened at the Osterwa Theatre on February 28, 1970. Marta Fik, the long-time critic for Teatr, objected to the production for much the same reason as Zygmunt Greń had in his review of In the Wings. In a long polemical analysis of the performance, she argues that

such a highly articulate and intellectually complex piece as The Interrupted Act could not (and thus should not) appeal to the common tastes of a popular audience, especially when those tastes are literally catered to by Braun with spoonfuls of eggnog.[21] Fik maintains that the production "pacified" (spacyfikował) Różewicz by "making" this difficult and supremely philosophical writer "accessible" (uprzystępnienie) to an audience more used to adaptions of dashing historical novels by writers such as Henryk Sienkiewicz, the Polish Walter Scott. That pursuit of accessibility would demand the inevitable "vulgarization" (wulgaryzacją) of his ideas. Damning with exceedingly faint praise, Fik did feel assured that the production would belong "to the more acclaimed openings of the season," and would "undoubtedly become a hit in Lublin."[22] But the playwright himself would have to pay the intellectual cost of such a commercial success.

Fik's primary objection to the production was that Braun, by remaining too faithful to the surface material of The Interrupted Act, had betrayed its deeper, more subversive intent. By transforming the interior text of Różewicz's mind into a step by step process that proceeded from initial discussion to final staging, Braun had created a clear, linear action which gave the performance an external, and easily followed, "plot." More damaging to the fiercely

independent mind of Różewicz was Braun's indiscriminate use of free wheeling humor and slapstick which, for Fik, demonstrated how easy it was for the contemporary theatre to turn this difficult and, at bottom, deeply sardonic attack on the conventional theatre into a delightfully palatable commercial hit. By inviting the audience into the actual act of creating this performance in, as Fik argued, such a "friendly fashion" (po przyjacielsku), Braun absolved them from confronting the darker implications and the "strange and uncommon doings" of Różewicz's theatre of the mind.[23]

These objections, it must be acknowledged, are well taken, as far as they go. But Fik did not finally see past the disingenuous playfulness of the production, and treated it as only a traditional, if somewhat zany, entertainment. Her review nowhere comments on the interaction of the actors and the audience (except for the eggnog), and she seems to have been unmoved by the powerful scene with the Daughter that ended the first act. She does admire the skill with which Braun managed to create a lively and natural sense of improvisation and spontaneity through the stage action, and she is particularly impressed with the way Tadeusz Borowski, as the Director, made his constant interruptions of the rehearsal seem natural and logical. But for all that she still saw the over-all production as a slick and manipulative exercise in traditional, illusionistic theatre practice. As in a Pirandello play, it was at just those moments

when the chaos and craziness seemed to be taking over that Braun and his actors were being the most manipulative.

One could of course argue as I have that that was precisely Braun's intention, to take the inherent chaos of creativity in the theatre and make a very clear and concise argument about what happens to it when it is shaped into a performance for an audience. One could also argue effectively that Różewicz himself, for all the interruptions and circumlocutions in the text, is always in control and knows exactly what he is doing. Despite the web of convoluted arguments about the breach between life and art, reality and illusion, text and performance, one insistent and socially committed intellectual force drives through both Różewicz's text and Braun's theatricalization of it. It is the desperate urge to break through the discreet barriers of art, abstraction, and high ideals that separate people, and to help them reach across a gulf of misunderstanding and self-enforced cultural and social bias. Theatre is not an object or even an event, it is an act.

Perhaps Marta Fik's objection to the production stemmed less from what she saw or how she saw it performed, than from her position in the theatre as she watched it. In his book The Theatre of the Community, Braun objects to the absurd custom of the modern theatre to hire paid specialists to judge a performance on behalf of the audience. This elitist delusion of reviewers only further serves to

separate the actors and the spectators by setting the critic up as an enlightened intermediary between the two groups. In the "savage theatre," which is Braun's inspiration for his new theatre, the critical response was always immediate, overwhelming, and unquestioned.[24] The audience was the only arbiter of success or failure. In one very crucial sense Fik was attending a performance in which she had no place. The actors and spectators had invaded and taken over her privileged territory to create new space. Perhaps Fik objected to The Interrupted Act, not because she could not get into it, but because she was being left out of it.

I would also suggest that given her special position in the theatre as critical mediary between actors and spectators, Fik was only able to see half of the performance and missed the "real" action in the seats. In a review of a production of Tonight We Improvise!, staged by the Living Theatre in New York in 1959, Robert Brustein makes a very astute comment about such performances that dismantle and desecrate the high solemnity of the theatre occasion. Behind the theatrical pranks and antics of Julian Beck and Judith Malina's anti-theatre theatre performance Brustein perceived a very serious concern. The Living Theatre wanted "to create new responses in the spectator by shocking him out of his old ones--to create, in effect, a new spectator."[25] The Interrupted Act, like Tonight We Improvise!, was a performance about creating new performances and new

spectators. Braun has stated that he chose to undertake the production because "I needed to force myself to break through a wall that surrounded me."[26] This wall imprisoned not only his own imagination and creative will, but also the stage of his theatre, his company of actors, and most importantly, his audience. The production succeeded at least in breaking through that initial wall between performers and spectators, and enabled them to meet face-to-face, talk to each other, think together, and even share a humble communion of eggnog. It was a start.

Braun's next difficult stage in his progress toward community would demand that he break through the walls of the theatre building itself and take his actors and audience out onto the common ground of the public streets of Lublin. He had published "The Theatre of the Community" in book form in 1972 after over two years' work. In order to test his new theory of theatre adequately Braun required a script that possessed an open or non-linear structure; that was filled with visceral, hard-edged images drawn from contemporary life; and that dealt uncompromisingly with an issue of vital and immediate concern to his entire community. The logical choice was again Różewicz, since all his plays, to some extent, address the most immediate and pressing issues of all--life and death. Braun chose The Old Woman Broods to produce in 1973 because it squarely faced

the one overwhelming issue faced by every person living in Poland every day: the possible end of their world and the chances, however slim, of survival.

Braun's choice of The Old Woman Broods immediately created a number of problems for him, not the least of which was with Różewicz himself. When Braun described his vision of the play to Różewicz he completely rejected it and refused to have anything more to do with it. He never saw the production. It was not Braun's intention simply to stage the play. He intended rather to "meet" it, confront it in the same spirit as Grotowski, who saw the theatre, through his early work with Polish national classics such as Akropolis and Forefather's Eve, as fundamentally a "collision with roots."[27] Those roots might be racial myths, national consciousness, or revered literary traditions. Braun was treating Różewicz, in one sense, as a classic author, and was attempting to crack the play open and extract whatever truth he could discover that would speak eloquently to his audience in 1973. He was going to use Różewicz to go beyond Różewicz.

Some would consider the production less a confrontation with the play than an assault upon it, so radical was its interpretation. Unlike The Interrupted Act, Birth Rate, or even The Card Index, which allow wide latitude in their staging and contain a large number of interpretive "holes," The Old Woman Broods is a completely envisioned stage-poem

with a fully realized mise-en-scène.[28] One-third of the text is stage directions and they are exceedingly exact for a director. Only rarely is a director allowed the kind of freedom that is offered in The Interrupted Act. Różewicz leaves very little to chance and is in complete control of the mass of sterile images, stage props, dialogue, and theatrical affects that fill the stage. The ordering of this theatrical collage, which is a gigantic garbage heap of modern culture, is painstakingly precise. All the elements of the collage are, in fact, subsumed within and controlled by this one sprawling image of a festering pile of waste. This ruling image is the total objectification of Rozewicz's all-encompassing vision of the world today. There is no other way to look at it except straight on. And there is certainly very little indication that anything--life, hope, desire--lies beyond it. The garbage just keeps pouring in to fill up the stage.

At various times the stage transforms into a waiting room of a train station, a beauty salon, a beach, and a battle field through which young men dig trenches. But the field of play remains always and forever a huge "necropolis," a city of the dead. Różewicz's most bitter reflection on this decayed state of modern culture is that still "life continues as normal."[29] Young girls sunbathe and gossip; young waiters tidy up the filth; old men read newspapers that contain theatre reviews; workmen paint white

lines down the center of garbage-filled streets. It is difficult to say whether Różewicz wants his audience to be repulsed more by the sight of the growing mass of garbage or by the maniacally calm and determined behavior of the inhabitants of this waste dump who, despite the imminent end of the world, carry on as usual as they wade through deepening drifts of refuse.

Underneath this mound of garbage, however, a tiny life is growing. The Old Woman, who is a kind of earth-mother turned bag lady, wanders the landscape shedding clothes, jewelry, and hair. She sucks on coffee dregs and sugar. She also miraculously gives virgin birth, apparently by sheer force of will. Despite her decrepit condition, she is aware of the life both deep inside her and outside the window of the waiting room where beautiful larches grew before the last great war. She bemoans the loss of trees, and celebrates the warmth of the womb. She speaks a poem that defends the soft bellies of women, which are themselves "great white poems," against the bayonets, bullets, shrapnel, and shells that grow out of men's bellies "filled with iron junk." To the Old Woman the belly is itself "a whole country/it is a defenseless and innocent country."[30] Birth becomes associated with all creativity, and she calls on anyone--men and women, old and young--to create new life. She names Sartre, Picasso, de Gaulle, Dali, and other creators to become potential breeders. The first act ends with

the delivery of her child, and as the curtain descends it is revealed to be an enormous bloody white sheet.

The Old Woman has given birth simultaneously to a child, a poem, and a country in the figure of a young, blond-haired man who is dressed in a kind of school boy's suit with a ruffled collar and a flower in his button hole. His hair is long and flaxen, and his expression is shy, pensive, and extraordinarily innocent. He speaks a beautiful lyric poem entitled "They" that celebrates the power of young love to discover wonder "like a pink elephant in a grey, ordinary day." The preciousness and potential banality of this sentiment is arrested by the very fact that this young man exists at all in the midst of this sea of waste. His presence is as miraculous as it is preposterous. The action of the play and the fate of the world hang on the destiny of this solitary figure of innocence and love.

His mother, the Old Woman, must release him into the world but she cannot let him go completely. She will not bite the umbilical cord that connects them. The young man meets a policeman as he begins his journey out into the world, and the "Guardian of Order," as Różewicz calls him, begins an interrogation of the young man. The youth is accused of littering! He has dropped the wrapper from a piece of candy he has just eaten. When he is asked for his identification papers he offers the flower from his lapel to the "Guardian." The official instantly becomes suspicious

and confused by this utterly guileless act, and takes out his truncheon. At that exact moment the stage lights begin to flicker, and the youth and the "Guardian" disappear in a sudden flood of darkness. When the lights return the Old Woman begins to dig frantically through the mounds of garbage in search of her lost child. Suddenly a massive iron curtain falls, "cutting" the stage off from the auditorium, and severing the actors from the spectators "like a huge sword."[31] The performance has ended. The theatrical umbilical cord has been cut.

But has the performance ended, or has it been simply "interrupted" once again? A great mystery and ambivalence surround the fate of the young, blond-haired man. Braun's production of The Old Woman Broods was less a confrontation with Różewicz than an answer to him, and to the profound question that lies at the heart of the play. Does the youth live or die? Who gets to him first, the Old Woman or the "Guardian"? And is it Różewicz's intention to convey, through the falling iron curtain, a warning that the suppression of theatre, or its willful abdication of its authority, will leave this drama perpetually arrested, interrupted?

Braun's production provided much more than an unequivocal answer to these questions. It enacted an apotheosis. The youth did not simply survive, he escaped free and clear. Through a pure act of theatre he escaped the theatre, along

with the other actors and the spectators. The youth was reborn, or rather metamorphosed, outside on the roof of the theatre building. He descended from the roof of Osterwa Theatre on a ladder, married the Old Woman (who was also reborn as a young woman), and drove off down the street on a honeymoon. The audience was then invited back onto the theatre to take part in the wedding reception. One can understand why Różewicz had to stay away.

With this production of The Old Woman Broods Braun radically altered both the physical playing space and the audience space for the first time. This was in part accidental. The production had been rehearsed, and was intended to be performed, in the Reduta, which was a small rehearsal hall in the theatre. The hall is named for Julius Osterwa's own studio theatre, which was founded in 1918 to explore the techniques of actor training begun by Stanislavsky. Osterwa's studio theatre focused on the intimate, collective work of his acting company, who lived and worked together as a creative commune. The initial work on The Old Woman Broods was carried on in that same spirit. The company also based much of their work on the rigorous self-exploratory techniques of Jerzy Grotowski, who himself had been deeply influenced by the work of Osterwa. Zbigniew Górski had already worked on a theatre project in the Reduta in early 1973 with Theatre Laboratory actors Zbigniew Cynkutis and Rena Mirecka. The performance, called Jałowa

(Barren), and based on Lorca's Yerma, was designed as a "theatrical happening", and was inspired in part by Grotowski's own production of Apocalypsis cum figuris.

Although the company for the production required only nine actors, they soon realized that the Reduta would be too small to accommodate an audience for the performance. The main theatre then had to be adapted by Braun to hold within its walls a studio theatre. An enormous rectangular platform was constructed which extended from the back of the stage across the orchestra seats to the back wall of the theatre. Its width was the width of the proscenium arch. Bleacher-type seating for approximately one hundred spectators was placed on the two long sides of the platform, creating a playing space down the center about ten by fourteen meters. Prior to the performance each night the spectators were escorted one-by-one from the theatre lobby downstairs through one of the dressing rooms and up into the theatre. The dressing room was scattered with used costumes from previous Osterwa productions.

As the spectators entered the theatre from a long, winding stairway, they observed the acting company performing vigorous physical exercises and relaxation techniques. The stage space was completely bare. Once all the spectators were seated, the performance began slowly to be constructed. Zbigniew Górski brought out some small cafe tables and chairs and placed them in the playing space.

Slowly the rhythmic exercises came to a halt, and the actors became motionless. The performance began.

Braun intended to merge two seemingly contradictory styles or methods of creating theatre with his production of The Old Woman Broods.[32] One approach to the performance was through the pursuit of rigorous authenticity inspired first by Stanislavsky and carried to its most extreme application by Grotowski. This involved the preparatory work done by the actors and Górski while still in the Reduta. The actors made no attempt to create the world of the necropolis, or the characters of the Old Woman, the Waiter, or the young blond Poet, as a fictional reality in which they could invest themselves with their imaginations and emotional will. The Grotowski actor searches within himself for deeply imbedded personal archetypes or latent psychic forces which can be released through a confrontation with a sacred text, a universal myth, or an ancient story. By drawing on these repositories of human experience an actor can "penetrate" himself to uncover sources of his authentic being through the experience of evil, holiness, love, violence, or humiliation.

Braun and his actors did not attempt to create an imaginary necropolis in which they could believe. They tried instead to uncover some connection between the text of Old Woman and an internal spiritual necropolis which they

would then have to acknowledge and deal with. This approach was meant to strip away the veneer of artifice and a reliance on external technique, and place the actors and spectators within a common arena inside Osterwa Theatre.

But Braun also approached the performance as an act of pure theatrical invention. Basing the action on the premise of free improvisation, the production became infused with a spirit of spontaneously generated play existing for its own sake. Through this dualistic approach of authenticity and artifice, Braun was trying to reach to the common source of two vital traditions of performance that are as old as the very idea of theatre. One tradition is that of the actor as spiritual exemplar or sacred healer. The other is that of theatre as pure celebration and ritual revelry. Both the sacred and the profane approach are united by a common ethos that Braun wanted to refine, that is, authenticity, although it might seem that this ethos follows its own particular logic and inspiration in each approach. In one sense the performance was striving both to become a kind of sacred rite or Mass, and also a very contemporary, free-style "happening."

Braun's inspiration for the production can actually be traced to a vague but highly intriguing image in <u>The Interrupted Act</u> that Różewicz uses to describe what a truly "contemporary" theatre might look like. In order for this new theatre to make its impact on a modern audience

acclimated to the world of absurdity and despair, it should be performed by children as a game. In order for the modern theatre to recover its spirit of risk and danger, it must recapture this principle of the game. Yesterday's brave avant-garde, the theatre of Beckett, Ionesco, Witkiewicz, and Dürrenmatt, has become for today's audience staid realism. Seeing characters buried to their necks in sand becomes an existential cliché to which people, comfortable in their sophisticated understanding of contemporary nihilism, give nodding assent. Różewicz suggests that a play whose characters are stuck up to their necks in sand should be set in a "large sandpit among children who are building sandcastles, throwing sand at each other, and when necessary, peeing into the sand."[33] We would then see that Beckett is "wonderful entertainment" which will reawaken us to the true existential danger of his plays, and not bore us by what we recognize as the same tired old absurd tales of pointless despair. Familiarity breeds indifference.

Różewicz's suggested use of children as a new kind of "primitive" actor also echoes Brecht's statement that children would be the most purely "alienated" actors for his plays because they would be incapable of diverting attention away from the truth of the action to their own skillful, self-conscious playing. The reality of a child performing cruel, selfish, or savage acts would then cause a deeper recognition in the audience of the enormity of the act and

its fatal consequences, even as he innocently creates it. The child's innocence makes that act of horror or savagery "strange" and renders it more grotesque and imminently dangerous than an audience might otherwise comprehend.

Actually Braun did not want his actors to "play" at being children as much as he wanted to help them return to a neutral state as savage innocents, to use the image of a child as a kind of first principle for the creation of Old Woman. Braun was intent upon having the performance grow spontaneously out of itself. The actors came to the project as if for the first time, without either artistic preconceptions or technical skills. The image of a child also allowed Braun to unite the two approaches he would take in his exploration of the text--authenticity and artifice. Children are completely unself-conscious and also absolutely free to create an artificial world out of their own imagination and enthusiasm for pure play. Children have also not begun to make the facile distinctions between illusion and reality that adults have learned to determine as a sign of supposed maturity. In children's games illusion and reality bleed into and infect each other, and that infection impels the game forward and generates its own internal logic.

It is also important to point out that this image of children, or childishness, carries none of the connotations of innocence and vulnerability in Różewicz, or in Braun's production, as it does in American culture. Working within

the modern European tradition of Dadaism and Surrealism, and within a native Polish tradition created in part by writers such as Witkiewicz and Gombrowicz, Różewicz sees in childishness the darker forces of the unconscious that erupt in unregenerate glee and a refusal to be socialized or tamed by civilization. The child is envisioned as a force both of destruction, of life's unredeemed savagery, and of liberation, life's refusal to submit to repressive control. Różewicz also uses the image of children playing in the sand in his play The Witnesses. An insipidly contented couple look out of their apartment window to see young children burying a small kitten alive.

Braun created the performance of The Old Woman Broods as a children's game that incorporated fantasy, ritual play, and spontaneous improvisation. There was no mass of garbage (initially), no characters in which to believe, no action that had to be imitated faithfully and accurately. The members of the acting company, playing as children, created the entire performance as an extended game, and invented the characters of the Old Woman, the Waiter, the Doctor, the Blind Man, and also the heap of garbage itself as part of the act of pure play. But it was a game that became increasingly real and more dangerous as the evening progressed. The audience saw the "huge necropolis," with its beaches and battlefields, not as a stagnant, decayed image of their world which could not be altered, but as an idea

that grew out of the heads of small children and played with perverse abandon. The audience also saw the possibility that a new idea could be born out of those same heads.

Braun did not discard the reality of the garbage heap. He asked his actors to treat it as a very real, very dangerous reality within themselves. He worked to help his actors enter "into the atmosphere of Różewicz's drama. . . . This process was to take place in the consciousness of the actors, while the text would be the completion of the world thus created."[34] In a long description and, as he says, "attempt" at interpretation of The Old Woman Broods published in Dialog, Krzysztof Sielicki outlined the evening's performance as an event or happening which was built up through a series of progressively more threatening improvisations and intensified role-playing. As the "game" progressed each night the actors, playing children, filled the playing space with garbage, played Blind Man's Bluff, attacked each other in a manic game of war, and retreated in terror. In the aftermath of war the playing became more cruel and sadistic even as life carried on, until the action was suddenly broken by a real old woman who appeared on the stage hand-in-hand with a small boy, and called to everyone to go outside with her. Possibly to play?

In order to reach this point of intolerable, childish savagery, it was crucial that the performance very gradually

generate its own sense of imminent spontaneity and improvisation. And within the structure and spirit of the game, real feelings had to be explored, exposed, and dealt with. The performance began almost imperceptibly as Górski, who would soon assume the role of the young Waiter, and Wanda Wieszczycka, who would play at being the Old Woman, entered into an imaginary game of "house." Wieszczycka, playing the expectant "momma," carried her imaginary child over to Górski, who had been watching her intently as she knitted a baby bunting. They engaged in a simple game involving the non-existent child, but the game became increasingly more cruel and aggressive until Górski refused to play any longer. He taunted the young mother as a sham and ridiculed her game of motherhood. But at that moment the danger was suddenly diffused as Wieszczycka called out "Waiter! Waiter!" and the game of the performance was returned to the plane of pure theatricality. In these first few moments Braun established a subtle but strong link between the creation of new life and free play. These two forms of authentic creation would become more closely tied as the evening progressed.

Górski, immediately assuming the role of Waiter, brought out piles of rags to drape over Wieszczycka, and together they constructed the "role" of the Old Woman. As Górski draped the actress with rags, she slowly transformed herself physically and vocally, trying out various gestures,

voices, and body movements. Once the Old Woman was created the action proceeded, using the text of the first act. When the action reached the moment of birth, the Old Woman declaimed the poem of the white belly, becoming almost possessed by it. As her frenzy grew, the company of actors were drawn to her like a "litter to their dam."[35] The Old Woman then gave birth to the entire company. They came forth from between her wide-spread legs and spilled out to the edges of the playing space. In a kind of ecstasy the Old Woman began to overturn waste receptacles that stood around the periphery of the space, and her children, following her lead, covered the stage in refuse. Most of the garbage was paper, but pieces of animal hides were mixed in to fill the room with the stench of death. The children continued the frenzy of scattering refuse until they collapsed in genuine exhaustion. The Old Woman had become covered with additional refuse as well so that the garbage heap became a massive extension of herself. She had given birth to both herself and to the world. She became the world.

The remaining action that took place inside Osterwa Theatre focused on individual scenes from Różewicz's text. These scenes were created as children's games, growing out of self-generated play. The game followed the same logic in each scene. The children would begin to play for the sake of playing, but as the game became more intense and "real,"

it grew inevitably more dangerous and cruel. The danger was diffused by the commencement of a new game, but as the actors worked internally to absorb and explore the implications of the strong psychic forces of violence, cruelty, and terror being released in the game, it became more difficult to recover the state of innocence each time a new game began. Following the war game and its aftermath, a "normal" order was re-established. But the young Waiter refused to play any longer, and the other actors ganged up on him. They tore a small stuffed animal out of his arms with which he had taken refuge, and began a final game of beating it to death. In the middle of this ritual beating, Braun introduced a startling element of reality to end the cruel game. The elderly woman appeared hand-in-hand with the young boy, and together they led both the actors and the spectators out of the theatre through the garbage, and into the courtyard outside.

Once everyone was gathered together in the courtyard, they witnessed what can only be described as the theatre building itself giving birth to the young Poet. It was Górski in his new incarnation. The remainder of the performance was played in this real environment. The only theatricalization of the physical space was the necessary presence of artificial light and a large pile of gravel and bricks in the center of the courtyard. As everyone gathered around this real waste dump, a light suddenly shown on a

second story window of the theatre where the Poet appeared clutching his flower. He recited a Różewicz poem titled "Longing" (Pragnienie), and then a ladder was put up to the window and Górski climbed down. He walked over to the old woman and the little boy and gave him the piece of candy. Authentic creation and real reality met face-to-face, and shook hands.

At that moment the "Guardian of Order" walked into the courtyard and asked for the young Poet's identification papers. This policeman, although played by an actor, was dressed in an actual militia uniform complete with gloves, truncheon, and boots. It was Braun's strategy in the performance that the spectators, or at least some of them, would think that it was an actual policeman coming to break up the assembly. The game of The Old Woman Broods had become too real, as it were. But in Braun's re-envisioning of Różewicz's play, the young Poet was no longer alone in his confrontation with the authorities, but was surrounded by his newly resurrected community of spectators. Imagination and reality fused into a vision of collective will, and when the Poet offered his flower as identification the policeman fled the scene.

Wieszczycka then suddenly appeared through a door adjacent to the theatre. She was dressed in a long wedding gown. She and Górski then opened the iron gate that separated the courtyard from Narutowicz Street, got into a

waiting car, and began to drive slowly off. Wieszczycka's long wedding veil streamed out the back window of the car and many of the spectators ran after carrying it as a kind of sail of parade banner. As the car speeded up the spectators stopped running and watched it disappear down the street. The remaining actors thanked the spectators for coming to the performance, and invited them all back into the Reduta hall for a wedding reception. The walls of the Reduta were covered in white sheets, and food, bread, milk, and fruit lay on tables around the room. This last part of the evening was completely unstructured. People talked, sang, and played guitars. Spectators were free to discuss their impressions of the performance with the actors, and leave whenever they chose to. Could this then be called the birthing of the theatre of the community?

One would probably have to say rather that this production of The Old Woman Broods represented the marriage ceremony (and perhaps also its consummation) of the old theatre and the new, which would produce in several more years a strong, healthy communal offspring in Wrocław. And judging by the welter of critical reaction, this "marriage" either confused, enchanted, bored, outraged, or delighted Braun's "guests" at Osterwa Theatre, depending upon each individual's personal theatrical allegiances. Sielicki included excerpts of several critical reviews at the end of his description/analysis.

Some critics, such as Maria Bechczyc-Rudnicka and Jan Kłossowicz, stood staunchly with tradition and found that the production violated either the integrity of Różewicz's text (especially in the facile celebration of optimism) or the authority of earlier productions of the play (in particular that of Jerzy Jarocki, the first and most successful director of Old Woman). Other critics found the production to be a spurious and self-conscious mimicking of the methods of the open theatre that merely displayed an ersatz authenticity when compared to the far more rigorous and emotionally hazardous explorations of the Grotowski actors.

But by attempting to locate Old Woman either within one tradition or the other and judging its unique efforts pale in comparison, most critics missed what was, I think, the essential quest and considerable accomplishment of Braun's production, which was to marry, inside and outside Osterwa Theatre, the old theatre and the new--the theatre of illusion and mise-en-scène, and the theatre of social gathering and intimate communion. And this marriage would be celebrated and sanctioned by the first principle of life and of theatre: creation and spontaneous generation.

It is crucial to appreciate, and Sielicki asserts this as well, that Braun's production of Old Woman was attempting to realize a new approach to the creation of a work of theatre art--relying almost entirely on the imagination and emotional conviction of its actors--within the rigid

structure of a typical provincial, or what is called a "district" (wojewodzki), theatre. As Sielicki points out, once a professional actor secures a position in such a theatre he is then assured employment, and he or she will often slip slowly into a state of professional indifference or creative lethargy. In many provincial theatres, actors are not challenged or encouraged to commit themselves to productions, but are allowed simply to do their jobs in role after role of numbing similarity. Directors are often too interested in staging their bold "interpretations" of plays to give time, attention, and authority to actors. The signal achievement of Braun's production, Sielicki argues, is that it "created a chance to rely on oneself (the actor)." The actors themselves became the theatrical propellant and unifying force of the moment-to-moment creation of The Old Woman Broods in the theatre each night. Sielicki called their work a "truly heroic effort undertaken by this company."[36]

But given this radical orientation to the creation of a performance, it is still a mistaken perception to view these actors stripped down to essentials as spiritual sufferers in the tradition of Grotowski. Unlike Grotowski, Braun believes that theatre (and by extension society and culture) thrives on the tension that is set up between reality and theatricality in the imagination of the spectators during a performance. That tension is most strongly felt in the

figure of the actor himself present in the theatre. It is the actor who creates the centrifugal force of the creation of the performance. He embodies the dialectical tension between imagining and authentic, substantial presence, the "here-and-now" experience that the spectators share. It is this tension that generates autonomous creative impulses in the spectator and suggests the possibility of re-envisioning the world.

Comparisons with the Grotowski actor ignore the central importance in Braun's theatre of precisely that creative, one could almost say demonic, force: theatre. Braun's productions are surrounded and saturated by theatre, and as has already been argued, Braun sees this element of play--of constructing and deconstructing theatrical reality--as a crucial and conscious force in the creation of culture, national identity, and the living myths of the community. Although the actor must always search for personal authenticity in his exploration of a role, he will often, as Zbignief Górski did in his creation of the Waiter and the Young Man, stand back from that role he must assume and comment on it or even disparage it. As Andrzej Wróblewski points out in his review in Argumenty, Braun encourages his actors to express "satiric or ironic content" (treści satyryczne czy ironiczne), as well as the mood of apocalypse and personal devastation that Grotowski attempts to reach through his actors.

The actor must negotiate through this charged theatrical field which he has created out of himself, but which he does not allow to overwhelm him with its fatal implications. The actor, as Sielicki says of Górski, "balances on the border between the truth about himself and the truth about a man from the junkyard-world."[37] While the truth that is imbedded in reality and the truth that is embodied in the theatre event continually converge and interpenetrate, they remain always distinct as two chemical charges working on the consciousness of the actors, and through them, that of the spectators. The relationship that the actors discover between themselves and the world of the text is one of immanence. They are personally responsible for the creation of the garbage heap in the theatre, and by extension, in the world. They discover garbage in themselves, as it were, and create out of that an acceptance of responsibility. But at the same time the actors can choose to un-create that vision of the world, and refuse to surrender to the crushing weight of its message. One is always free to make choices since the world is always partly one's creation of it.

Unless one can understand and accept this paradoxical nature of the production and its dynamically suspended dualism of experience, the entire theatrical arc and progress of the performance will remain a confused, cinematic amalgam of images, improvisations, exercises, and philosophical conceits. It would remain so for a number of

critics. The actors in the theatre attempted to deal authentically with the reality of the world as a vast garbage heap and with their complicity in its creation. And when they and their spectators moved outside the theatre into the real world of the streets of Lublin, they intended to bring with them that charged atmosphere of naive and potent imagining which had been set free inside.

Monika Wrzesińska, writing in Kultura, quite beautifully and perceptively records what this journey out onto Narutowicz Street was intended, by Braun, to mean for his audience: ". . . the vision of a dead world obtained an unexpected alternative in the real world. The courtyard, the street, the trees, were no longer a nightmare. Their concreteness gave the visions the dimension of a fairy-tale."[38] This emergence into the world transformed by the sheer will of imagination became the consummation of a kind of Pirandellian dance of reality and illusion in which real actors invested themselves authentically in a consciously theatrical event, only to be confronted by real individuals (an old woman and a young boy) who would lead them all out into the real world to transform it through love, talk, singing, laughing, eating and drinking.

In the final analysis, The Old Woman Broods perhaps asked too much of its audience, even with their initiation into the world of autonomous play and creative free will provided by The Interrupted Act. And indeed the audacity

and determined originality of Braun's methods in creating the performance made it seem self-conscious and contrived to some critics and spectators. But it must be said that Braun, as he had in many earlier productions, intended first of all to challenge his audience and to offer them the opportunity to participate more fully--as creative individuals seeking stronger bonds of community--in his performance of The Old Woman Broods. Braun has always insisted that his audience choose freely to engage themselves on an imaginative and emotional level with the performers in his theatre, and to see the chance of achieving a deeper connection. The choice must be there to make, and it must not be imposed or induced like a wild revel through the intoxication of pure theatre and play.

Witold Filler, in an articulate and sensitive analysis of the production, sees that the entire evening was designed to arrive at precisely this moment of choice. The performance offered each spectator "a real chance: in the name of his imagination. . . . It depends on their (the spectators) strength of will whether they will be able to make illusion, dream, paradise, materialize. . ." The performance had to culminate outside the theatre because, as Filler says, "real reality offers man possibilities that fictional reality lacks."[39] The world of the theatre remains self-enclosed, unless you open a window and crawl through.

And you have to ask people to follow you out, which was a lot to ask in the summer of 1973. "Real reality" in Poland didn't seem to need the goad of imagination to transform its latent possibilities into a dream of national greatness. Reality was being fed by the gentle stimulants of industrial productivity and consumer satisfaction provided by the Gierek economic programs. It would be three more years before exorbitant price hikes would cause the eruption of summer strikes in the factories of Ursus and Radom. The "moment" wasn't right in 1973, and the production never managed to transcend the realm of a curious and unorthodox, if for many an entertaining and provocative, theatrical experience.

Although it was possible in 1973 to crash through the walls of the theatre building, it was still exceedingly difficult to break through the imaginative walls that spectators constructed around the performance to keep it safely removed as "theatre." Even standing on Narutowicz Street the spectators were still watching a performance, simply made more theatrical and intriguing by the strange and exotic environment. It would take not only theatrical, but historical, events to break down those imaginative walls between "theatre" and "real reality." To prepare for them, Braun would, within a year, break through the walls of Osterwa Theatre finally and for good. By the middle of the

1974-75 season he was gone from Lublin, and on his way to Wrocław.

CHAPTER V:

RE-THEATRICALIZING THEATRE SPACE

Braun's move to Wrocław in the fall of 1974 was not the result of a carefully planned strategy, nor the inevitable next move in a steadily ascending professional career. On the contrary, it was, to a large extent, the result of coincidences which proved to be surprisingly fortuitous. The move from Lublin represented one of several smaller "moments" in Braun's career when his theatre work, the intrusive power of the authorities, and his own stubborn convictions collided. He had already resolved to resign his post at Osterwa Theatre during the 1973-74 season. His decision was precipitated by the government, which withdrew its previous promise to Braun to build a new theatre complex in Lublin. Braun had been planning the construction of this new building since 1972, the year after he replaced Jerzy Torończyk as Managing Director of Osterwa following his death in 1971. This new theatre complex became an integral part of Braun's vision for a new kind of theatre for the community of Lublin in the coming years.[1]

The theatre, as Braun had envisioned it, was to have been a multi-purpose, flexible space that could be adapted to proscenium, thrust, or arena staging. Braun drew on the extensive research in the history of theatre architecture he had undertaken for his book, The Theatre of the Community, to develop a design, and he had consulted with two French architects to execute it. But during the long, laborious administrative process endemic to centralized bureaucracies, the conductor of the city Philharmonic, and also a party member, placed a bid to have the complex include space for an orchestra hall. Braun's dream of an intimate, functional, and flexible theatre space was violated by the intrusion of this alien space into his own. He determined in late spring 1974 to end his association with Osterwa and with Lublin. He remained at the theatre to direct his last production of the season in early fall, a comedy by the nineteenth-century Polish writer, Alexander Fredro.

It was only by the luckiest chance that the position at Współczesny Theatre opened when it did. The Artistic Director, Józef Para, had been installed there only two years before, but his lack of success, both with his audience and his actors, caused him to resign his post at mid-season, 1974-75. Braun was already known in Wroclaw through his work with Zbigniew Cynkutis, a member of Grotowski's Laboratory Theatre who had directed a Grotowski-inspired production at Osterwa just before the opening of Old Woman. Braun

had also made contacts through his appearances with successful productions at national festivals in Toruń and Kalisz. He had also brought his acclaimed production of The Interrupted Act to the Wrocław Festival of Polish Contemporary Drama. Perhaps most instrumental in helping get Braun to Wrocław was the Editor-in-Chief of the distinguished literary journal Odra, Zbigniew Kubikowski, who later became a close friend. Różewicz, of course, was also very influential and persuasive.

Assuming an Artistic Director post at mid-season is quite unusual, but the half-season, beginning January 1, 1975, gave Braun the unique opportunity to lay the foundation for his new theatre of the community not in his new theatre, but in the community of Wrocław itself. He actually began making trips to Wrocław in fall 1974 because he had been granted a position as professor of theatre history and critical theory in the Institute of Contemporary Culture at the University of Wrocław. As he began making trips every two weeks to lecture at the University, he made an extensive list of over fifty individuals whom he intended to seek out and talk to over the entire year. The list included members of other professional theatres, critics, scholars, directors of student theatres, and members of the media. He wanted to learn from the community what it sought for in a theatre, the kinds of productions it wanted to see,

and the political and social issues it felt needed to be addressed. Braun was determined to build, not just a "contemporary" theatre, but specifically a "Wrocław" theatre. Józef Kelera commends Braun for taking this unaggressive tactic to introduce himself to the people of Wrocław: "All in all, it was a much more effective 'entrance' than giving interviews or making promises."[2] Braun intended first to become a citizen of this sophisticated, astute, and intellectually discerning community, and only after would he seek to become an artist who could represent its members in his theatre.

This first year in Wrocław also gave Braun the opportunity and time to begin to assemble very carefully an acting company of distinguished caliber. He proceeded to build his company drawing on several sources. He kept several actors who had been working at Wspolczesny, in particular Maria Zbyszewska, who had already established herself with Wrocław audiences as a great talent. She would become of Braun's strongest and most versatile character actresses. He also brought in his best actors from Osterwa Theatre, including Edwin Petrykat, Pawel Nowisz, and, of course, Zbigniew Górski. He also traveled extensively to other theatres in Poland to find actors whom he felt would be able to meet the challenge of a new approach to performance that he had begun to explore in productions like Old Woman. He succeeded in attracting Teresa Sawicka and

Bugosław Kierc, who would become two of his most accomplished actors in the coming years. And he would eventually attract actors from other professional theatres in Wrocław, in particular Andrzej Wilk and Andrzej Mrożek, who joined the company in 1980. When Braun began his first full production season in 1975-76, he had assembled a first-rate company of actors who were able and eager to evolve performance techniques that would combine rigorous traditional training with the most recent trends in close ensemble work.

Braun was also helped enormously in the formation of his company by the administrative reforms enacted by the government in 1975. These reforms gave Artistic Directors considerably more freedom and authority to employ actors and build a challenging repertoire. The reforms came as a reaction to the growing need, felt by the state theatres, to stimulate a more openly collaborative relationship with their audiences and to encourage a greater degree of artistic autonomy and self-direction. The avowed purpose of this restructuring of theatre administrations and artistic programs, as described by Jan Kłossowicz in Theatre In Poland, was to fulfill the ideal of a "company of actors assembled around its director with the purpose of working together toward a common goal."[3] Artistic Directors were allowed to employ actors on either a one- or three-year contract to help instill an atmosphere of ongoing experimentation, growing ensemble strength, and artistic continuity. For

once the authorities seemed to be helping rather than hindering Braun's progress.

With his company in place for the 1975-76 season, Braun began slowly to build a repertoire that would emphasize contemporary Polish plays, modern European drama, and some classics. However, there would be fewer romantic plays in the repertoire than he had previously produced. The great exception to this rule would be Forefathers' Eve, which he would stage twice in the late seventies in response to the gathering political storm. In keeping with his vision of a contemporary, "Wrocław" theatre, Braun chose the most widely-recognized and controversial playwright living in Wrocław, Tadeusz Różewicz, to open his season and introduce himself and his hand-picked company of actors to the members of his new community.

Różewicz had completed his latest play, White Marriage (also called Mariage Blanc in English translation), at the end of 1973, and it had its world premiere in Warsaw in a production staged by Tadeusz Minc at Teatr Mały. A Wrocław world premiere would of course have been auspicious, but Różewicz could not be asked to wait six months for a production. But as it turned out, Braun staged something of a personal coup by giving the play a production more faithful to Różewicz's original vision for it than Minc's world premiere. As Różewicz conceived it, the play is a painfully intimate and at times even embarrassing examination of the

tragic awakening of sexuality in the individual, seen through the eyes (and mind) of a frightened, emotionally delicate young girl. Through explicit language and even more explicit theatrical images, Różewicz explores the terrors and desires of the body, the cruelty of repression and morality, and the dark power of the unconsciousness.[4] White Marriage demands enormous risks on the part of both a director and his actors. Although Braun had moved slowly and cautiously into the Wrocław community, with his production of White Marriage he was finally announcing his arrival with a grand theatrical gesture.

Ironically, the play appears, at least on the surface, to be a less fractured work of Różewicz dramaturgy into which he incorporates powerful elements of expressionism. It seems to mark his return to a more linear form of story-telling that uses some theatrical distortion to heighten the drama. White Marriage is set in a private family estate in fin-de-siecle Poland, and the action tells a story with inexorable dramatic force that pushes relentlessly toward an explosive climax and shocking denouement. The world of the play harks back to a turn-of-the-century, thoroughly bourgeois, middle-class milieu, and it evokes the repressive, domestic interiors of the late-nineteenth century realism of Ibsen, Chekhov, and early Strindberg.

Even the moral catastrophe propelling the play forward recalls the late-nineteenth century theatre, which portrayed

the tragic failure of personal liberation to overcome the cruelty and repressive domination of parents, and social and spiritual authorities. These representatives of the "good" society are themselves often sick with the very disease of sexual neurosis and moral cowardice with which they condemn those who refuse to conform. White Marriage is a tragedy of failed liberation, strangled by the corrupt power of a dead society. But despite its fin-de-siecle milieu, the play does also continue in the tradition of post-war Polish drama which places a young, sensitive, and morally confused individual inside a completely alien and socially decomposing modern world, and then records his desperate search to recover himself and his place in that world.

But the focal tragic figure in White Marriage is not a chronically alienated and self-tormenting young man like Arthur in Mrożek's Tango or Henryk in Gombrowicz's The Marriage, but an innocent and emotionally fragile young girl who discovers the tragedy of life and of the world inside her own body. This in itself marks a radical departure in Polish theatre. As Rhonda Blair makes clear in her essay "White Marriage: Różewicz's Feminist Drama," Polish drama has always been "heavily androcentric,"[5] and the fact that Różewicz has written a drama with a woman, let alone a very young girl, as the central tragic character suggests that he is offering a radical new reading of contemporary Polish issues and possibly a whole new vision of Poland's national

quandary. (Różewicz had, of course, already written one tragedy with a central, although much older, woman character.)

White Marriage centers on the character of Bianca (derived from the Italian word for "white"). As a very young woman, she is psychically torn between a fixation on her just-emerging sexual identity and on her impossibly romanticized love for her fiance, Benjamin, to whom she was betrothed before she had the lightest awareness of the frightening mysteries of her body. She is also torn between her abject fear and deep resentment of her parents, who have cruelly denied her existence as an emerging sexual being, as a woman. The play intimately registers and charts Bianca's tragic failure to recover herself as a woman and an independent being, and take her place in the adult, social world.

But if the play seems to mark a retreat to an earlier cultural era and theatrically more coherent form, it still very much represents a new stage in the evolution of Różewicz's personal vision of the modern world and reaffirms his belief in the theatre's power to investigate that world and bring it to judgment. As Daniel Gerould says, Różewicz seeks always to uncover "truth in nakedness, in the bare biological facts of the human organism and the world of things that surrounds it."[6] In White Marriage, the truth that is uncovered is the sexual, social, and spiritual nakedness of the individual, and Różewicz portrays his

characters stripped bare of all consoling dreams, ideals, and abstractions. There is nowhere to hide or retreat to for safety. We enter the play through the private chambers of a young girl's self, which is just emerging into the shocked awareness of its existence as a deeply violated and vulnerable being. And while the play makes no overt connection between the world of her family and the world of national issues, in its ruthless examination of the politics of victimization and in its outrage at the strangulation of life in the name of a higher moral order, it expands poetically to become a contemporary model of a centuries-old national tragedy.

The opening scene of the play takes place late at night in the lamp-lit bedroom of Bianca and her live-in companion Pauline, who is much more comfortable and aggressive with her sexual identity. They whisper together and share the most intimate secrets and mysteries of the body. In The Interrupted Act, Różewicz had found the greatest dramas in the tiny holes in reality, in the hole in a sock or even in a piece of cheese. In White Marriage he locates the universal tragedy of life in the orifice of a young girl who, in the first blood that flows out of her onto her clean, white bed sheets, sees the reality of an irresistible fate opening up inside her. To struggle with that fate Bianca will be forced to open up her entire being and soul to be penetrated by the world. To recover herself she will have to take the

only stand she can as a person whose consciousness has been borne out of victimization. She eventually enters into a "white marriage" which will preserve the last vestige of her innocence and integrity, but which will abort her identity as a sexual being and a woman.

White Marriage could be called a tragedy of "wholeness," and Bianca's desperate struggle to make herself and the world whole again inevitably ends in her realization that the whole world, like her own body, is a wound that cannot be healed. Projected onto the social plane, Bianca's stricken awareness of her own state of shameful isolation and self-division becomes a collective tragedy that is borne by her whole family. Through her naive eyes we see Bianca's mother and father, aunt and grandfather psychologically stripped bare and exposed to her terrified gaze. Their only salvation or retaliation against the tragedy of life lies in the grim exercise of power, control, or denial. Psychic survival requires both moral and political weapons of defense. Cruelty and suffering, repression and victimization, are revealed as opposite faces of the same coin of tragic self-division. Political order is a false healing of the body politic, a phony restitution of "wholeness."

Again, although the play does not address specifically political issues, Spencer Golub argues convincingly that White Marriage speaks eloquently "to the ideal of communion,"[7] and that it could only have been written by someone

living on very intimate terms with the anguish of national division and spiritual estrangement within the body politic. Golub sees striking parallels between the wounded body of a young girl and the image of Poland as a living symbol of "all suffering humanity" crucified on a cross of national humiliation. Is Bianca a stand-in for Poland's tragic destiny, and should a production of the play sharpen the poetic resonances to embrace this larger historical vision?

I would argue that White Marriage derives its theatrical potency less from its ability to expand by sexual analogy to encompass a social, a national, and even a mystical dimension than from the sheer cumulative force of that action of metaphorical expansion and contraction. That is to say, the play expands and contracts poetically between an innocent, helpless girl's most private and frightened thoughts about her body and the world's vast tragic suffering. Różewicz achieves this spiraling force by leading the spectator into the world of White Marriage directly through the consciousness of Bianca, who transforms that world entirely. And this is where Braun felt a successful production had to begin, in the most intimate, frightened thoughts and fantasies of Bianca. By fixing on the precise moment of tragic sexual awakening, Różewicz is able to push his drama into that hallucinogenic terrain where reality and illusion, bodies and dreams, enchantment and terror hover suspended in

consciousness. Objects become both dense and material, and phantasmagorical. People assume the status of objects, and objects radiate with sexual, fetishistic power. As Golub says, "Adolescent sexuality, with its imagined thrills beyond sin, self-loathing beyond forgiveness, and love beyond all rational measure, is akin to the pathological."[8] But for Różewicz that "pathology" is simply the proper state of imaginative preparedness to enter into his perverse vision of the modern world as seen through the eyes of one of its most innocent victims.

On one level the play is constructed as a coherent, self-propelled action that gives Bianca's progress toward her "white marriage" with her romantic young fiance, Benjamin, the momentum of an awful destiny. But on another level, or rather on several other levels, the play sucks the imagination of the spectator deeper into the coursing stream of the mind as it succumbs to the power of its own pathological absorption with the body, with lurid fantasy, and with erotic dreams. The central dramatic action of White Marriage is transmutational. The play is located very much along the line of Różewicz's evolution as a theatre poet, and carries further his vision of the modern world as an intensely pressurized collage of objects, images, fragments of culture and stray thoughts. He builds his play up through the accumulating power of aggregation and juxtaposition.

In White Marriage Różewicz goes beyond the action of simply juxtaposing these fragments of a blasted, fragmented world within the dense field of his consciousness, and attempts to set up a kind of current, which one could almost call libidinal, that will flow in, around, and through those fragments and charge them with intense theatrical life. As a tragedy of wholeness, the play radiates a kind of fetishistic aura in which characters are drawn irresistibly to objects and other characters as they attempt to fill up the holes in their beings. The play is filled with the intimate objects of domestic life, and they take on a sexual life of their own in the dark imaginings of people who can barely control who they are or what they want from life. As Golub says, the world of White Marriage overflows with images of:

> . . . birth and death, sex and eating, sex and death, of hot fires and cool china, foul-smelling phallic toadstools and deep, pure well water, bowls of virginal white cream upon which balance rank-smelling cigar butts, images of trousseau trunks in which white bed linen is mingled with white table linen, and tables turn into beds.[9]

Indeed objects, as well as parts of the body and people themselves, steal reality or draw it off from each other so that familiar domestic objects take on a lurid, sexual life; legs and tongues become phalluses; and human beings turn into animals. In the libidinally charged, phantasmagoric world of White Marriage it is impossible to distinguish

reality and illusion, material existence and the morbid play of the mind.

But the most daring and shocking element of Różewicz's utilization of the principle of transmutation to propel his play (and the most risky element for a director to deal with on the stage) is his explicit stage directions that require characters to be transformed literally into animals, vocally as well as physically. Bianca's father is transformed in the heat of passion into a half-man, half-bull, a kind of sexual minotaur; her aunt's face seems to take on the appearance of the rear-end of a chicken, and she clucks instead of speaking. At the wedding celebration that ends the play all the characters, apart from Bianca and Benjamin, are transformed into grotesque beasts, and their conversation becomes an unintelligible cacophony of grunts, growls, clucks, and squeals. And at various moments during the play, male characters, through Bianca's consciousness, seem to grow enormous phalluses, and this (in Różewicz's stage directions) must be clearly apparent to the audience. The demands, both technical and personal, that Rozewicz's stage action places on a company of professional actors (especially one introducing itself to a new audience) are intimidating.

But the newly-assembled company of actors at Wspolczesny was prepared to meet those demands. Braun understood that in order for White Marriage to probe beneath the fin-

de-siecle surface of domestic, sexual tragedy and reach a darker substratum of collective victimization and universal violation, a production of the play would have to deal directly with the uncomfortable intimacy and explicit subject matter of the play. He also appreciated that in order to translate the principle of transmutation into a coherent and unifying stage action, it would be necessary to move quickly and fluidly from one plane of action in the play to another, from the privacy of the girls' bedroom, to the world of family and social life, and finally to the dark recesses of fantasy, dreams, and the unconscious as they emerged on the stage. As Braun describes it in his article "Tadeusz Różewicz: Playwright for the Electronic Age," a staging of the play demands that space in the theatre take on an expressionistic distortion of reality without, however, obliterating that very real and tangible world of the family and its domestic tragedy. "Between the drawing room, the forest, and the Church (the scene of several private confessions), there appear to be no clearly established borders; any one of these planes may dominate."[10] Essentially, White Marriage is a more intensely pressurized version of Różewicz's "realistico-poetic" theatre, and the sense of raw, palpable reality cannot be sacrificed for the sake of a heightened expression of poetic phantasmagoria.

By redesigning the stage space at Współczesny, Braun had already made a bold move toward greater intimacy with

his audience. The enlarged forestage now thrust out directly into the auditorium to the edge of the seats. Braun staged the private scenes in Bianca and Pauline's tiny bedroom on one side of the forestage, and placed their father's private study on the opposite side. Both rooms were very small and contained only a few pieces of functional furniture. The girls' room was entirely white, hung with softly draped gauze material that enveloped the two beds, which were covered in white fur. The beds were placed at an angle toward each other so that Bianca and Pauline could whisper to each other in hushed, secretive voices and still be heard in the audience. Braun felt that it was absolutely essential that the production capture this feeling of extraordinary privacy and isolation from the very first moments of the action. And in order to render the borders between the different planes of reality as indistinct as possible, Braun placed the parlor, where most of the family scenes took place, at mid-stage and defined that space also with only a few functional pieces of furniture. The dominant feature of this space was a very large standing mirror painted white. These pieces of furniture could be quickly and easily removed to leave a bare, neutral area on the empty stage.

Furthest upstage on a level that was raked slightly up from the stage floor toward the back wall of the theatre, Braun placed the black, silhouette outlines of the trees of

the forest. The forest is the setting for a crucial scene in the play in which the family goes on a picnic. As Różewicz describes it, the forest possesses an almost "fairy tale" quality or fantasy and danger, and it is in the forest that characters begin their transformation into grotesque animal shapes.[11] Braun had the forest hover over and envelope the entire stage world of White Marriage. In front of a deep blue sky cyclorama, Braun placed the trees of such enormous height that they extended out of sight above the stage. They were so tall that only the bare trunks and a few branches at the very tops were visible. The trunks were also cut very unevenly so that the forest took on an eerie, expressionistic life of its own, and the trees seemed at times to move slowly or undulate. They were painted solid black. It was in this expressionistic forest that the transmutational power of fantasy originated and became most grotesquely pronounced. And by being pushed far upstage, the forest also radiated an air of mystery and dark magic, and evoked the haunting atmosphere of the most frightening children's fairy tales.

Although the text does not state it explicitly, it does strongly suggest that the dominant color scheme should be a stark contrast of black, white, and red. Braun created a mise-en-scène that was completely black and white, but which was invaded at times by violent reds. (Różewicz indicates that several scenes become flooded suddenly with glowing red

light.) The overwhelmingly predominant image in the play is, of course, menstrual blood on white bed sheets, but it also contains myriad references to white underclothing, bed and table linens, and girls' dresses. White acts as a symbolic vortex that draws the contradictory images of purity and sterility, innocence and death, pure white table linens and soiled bed sheets into its neutral field. That inherent contradiction intensifies the paralyzing ambivalence at the heart of the play that finally drives Bianca to demand her "white marriage." In Braun's production, white sheets, linens, and delicate underclothing became so many gashes in the otherwise dark body of the play. In the final grotesque scene, the marriage bed became transformed into a funeral bier.

But the most significant theatrical embellishment or distention that Braun incorporated into the production (with Różewicz's reluctant approval) was the appearance of huge, oversized puppets at certain moments in the play. These enormous puppets were by no means simply grafted onto the play, since Różewicz had provided explicit stage directions for extending the phantasmagorical vision of the world of White Marriage into the realm of the expressionistic grotesque. Bianca's father does indeed appear on stage wearing a bull's head and horns, and other male characters grow enormous phalluses. And in the final wedding scene all the

characters have been transformed into beasts who grunt, snort, and squeal.

Braun wanted to extend to a moral plane this intrinsic impulse within the play to intensify theatrically whenever the inner struggle of Bianca intensifies and threatens to overwhelm her. He believed that a faithful production of the play had to encompass this profoundly moral struggle as well. Although Bianca is sent reeling by her sudden awakening to the rapacity of sexual power and sees the world alive with unrepressed desire, it is really her soul that she is trying to keep from being violated, her most intimate and private self. For Braun, White Marriage is a "morality play,"[12] and if the play enacts a brutal struggle between men and women, eroticism and repression, it also enacts a war of cruelty and suffering, power and powerlessness, suppression and capitulation. Bianca fights and in the end takes her stand, not only to preserve her body from being violated, but to keep from surrendering her self, her soul, to the oppressor.

To convey this dimension of the text as a "morality play," Braun introduced the enormous effigies of an angel and a devil into the scenes that occur in the forest, which Różewicz calls in appropriate fairy tale parlance, "the Black Wood."[13] As this fairy tale scene opened, Bianca and Pauline, dressed in delicate white dresses and walking hand-in-hand, were followed by a ten-foot tall angel in a flowing

white gown and gauzy wings. She appeared like something out of a medieval nativity pageant. As she glided silently behind the girls they seemed to be even more innocent and vulnerable than they had earlier in their room.

The effigy of the devil was an enormous, grotesque Pan figure, covered in thick black hair and black shroud, and sprouting a huge, erect phallus. In a way these effigies were reminiscent of the huge dolls that Braun used in his production of The Wedding in Toruń. They were meant to expand the play beyond the dimension of social or historical tragedy to encompass both a more universal and a more personal struggle. Bianca was simply a representative of the collective lives of Braun's audience, who were facing their own moral trials in an ongoing war of power and capitulation. The giant figures of good and evil engaged in an ancient and eternal struggle.

Braun also opened the production with a frightening effigy of sexual power that threatened to envelope and suffocate the entire world of the play, and even the theatre itself. In a later scene in the play that also takes place in the girls' room, Bianca tells Pauline her terrifying dream in which an old man with a white beard and red cloak enters her room, and then begins to grow until his body fills the entire room. Bianca imagines that he is St. Nicholas, a purified and benevolent image of the father. He then moves very close to her and slowly begins to draw up

her night dress. Bianca can hear his hoarse breathing, and she lies on the bed "like a corpse."[14] The clock strikes twelve and the figure disappears from her room. Bianca calls the episode "a vision."

Braun took this highly ambivalent image of St. Nicholas, which combined the kind and gentle image of the father and the terror of oedipal assault, and placed it at the beginning of the production. After the stage darkened, it was flooded with a blood-red light. The huge effigy of St. Nicholas moved slowly through the black trees of the forest and then glided downstage. As it moved closer to the audience it began to expand its cloak until it grew and covered nearly the entire proscenium opening. At that moment the stage went to black and then the first scene in the girls' bedroom began.

As the production moved in and out of this phantasmagoric world of terror and fantasy, Braun made very effort to maintain the painful, and at times for the audience very uncomfortable, sense of privacy and isolation with which the play begins. A very critical scene early in the play takes place in a confessional in church as Bianca, her grandfather, and her mother each come to make his or her confession of shameful desires and barely repressed urges. Grandfather confesses his masturbatory fantasies which humiliate him as an old man, and Mother confesses that she has been disgusted by her husband ever since their wedding night.

Like Bianca, she was forced to marry a young man that she barely knew, and was kept ignorant of sex until, by force, she learned it first-hand.

Braun placed the confessional, which Różewicz locates in front of a purple curtain at mid-stage in the area of the drawing room, at the very edge of the forest. Each character entered the tiny box and, concealed from view, began to whisper his or her sins of desire, mortification, or revulsion. Braun had the confessional miked so that the whispers could be heard clearly out in the auditorium. He wanted to create the sensation that the confessions were being whispered into each spectator's ear. The effect of these disembodied voices sharing their most private, shameful secrets with the audience was deeply disturbing.

Braun also made daring use of nudity onstage, not for its theatrical shock value or to enhance the erotic power of the play, but to present in the most direct manner possible the inescapable fact of human nakedness, both physical and emotional. In TABLEAU 4 (the play is divided into thirteen "tableaus" rather than scenes), the family is having a properly genteel party with poetry recitations and a piano recital. Benjamin is reciting a sickly romantic love poem by a poet of the Młoda Polska or "Young Poland" school, a literary movement at the turn of the century that combined neo-romantic emotional excesses with a symbolist penchant for shimmering images. Bianca accompanies him on the piano.

She is entranced by her handsome fiancé, but suddenly she is overcome by an erotic hallucination in which she sees an enormous phallus growing between Benjamin's legs.

In production, Braun eliminated this shocking hallucination (which also occurs moments later between Pauline and Grandfather) and replaced it with a much more direct and disturbing confrontation. After Benjamin had finished his recitation, Bianca continued to play the piano. Suddenly she saw him again, naked, standing in the large mirror in the center of the room. He then stepped through the mirror and walked slowly toward her. No one else, of course, could see him, but Bianca's distraction at seeing Benjamin suddenly there in front of her caused her to mangle her piano recital in a stutter of dissonant notes.

Benjamin's appearance through the mirror prefigured and strongly suggested the tragedy of self-alienation and self-division that finally overwhelms Bianca. The source of Bianca's tragedy of "wholeness" does not lie in her sudden awakening to her violated body through menstruation, but to an earlier and much more devastating feeling of separation and "incompleteness" when she realized that her father wanted her to be born a boy. Her father had desperately wanted a male child, and when Bianca cried out as an infant he "turned away in disgust." Her own disgust and horror at being an "unclean vessel" stems from her desperate desire to be whole again, not only within herself, but in her

relationship with her father. Her entire world is a wound that can never be healed.

Braun used the standing mirror to project in stark theatrical images Bianca's heartbreaking sense of the loss and the separation of her self (her dreamed self as whole) from herself. In TABLEAU 9, Bianca examines her face and body very carefully in the mirror, and then slowly begins to slip into a dream state or hypnotic trance. She begins to speak in a "monotonous voice as if it did not belong to her," as she tries to reach out to her father in her mind. In the text he enters in the shadows as the minotaur. In Braun's production he appeared again through the mirror, without the bull's head, and he held the young male child that should have been Bianca on his knee. As Bianca spoke to her father telling him how her mother "brought me up and dressed me like a boy until I was ten,"[15] she saw herself in the wished-for male child, not only <u>with</u> a member to make herself whole again, but <u>as</u> a member reunited with the family and with the world. Benjamin thus became her other self, grown up, whole and intact, and to give herself up to him would mean the destruction of her own body, the rape of her being.

Braun used this narcissistic, mirror image of the split self to propel the action of the play toward what became the most theatrically shocking moment in the production, and the only possible gesture left for Bianca to preserve her

violated, and tragically divided self. Bianca does not remain a complete victim throughout the play. From this moment of deep, Oedipal trauma, Bianca begins to explore the power of gestures, some physical and some only intensely fantasized, that will enable her to retrieve that lost part of herself, her male "other," and to strike back against a world that sees her as a helpless, wounded victim. As she meditates on the image of her father (this is in the text) she begins to slip deeper into fantasy, and the stage is once again flooded with a blood-red light. Bianca and her father slowly transform themselves on-stage into dark fantasy figures, she as a toreador carrying a rapier and he as the minotaur. They enact a slow ritual dance-of-death and she pierces him with the sword. He staggers, collapses to the ground, and dies. Instead of a red cape, Bianca carries a white wedding veil. Braun staged this scene exactly as specified by Różewicz.

In the next tableau, which occurs very late at night, Bianca removes the entire contents of her trousseau from the wardrobe, including bed and table linen, petticoats, and underthings. They are all pure white. Różewicz specifies that she tears each item up passionately but also "systematically," and when some of the pieces of clothing refuse to tear she rips them with her teeth. Finally she takes a large tailor's scissors and cuts up the remaining items, including large table cloths. She also names each item as

she tears, bites, and cuts. She ties the pile of rags up with a ribbon and places it back in the wardrobe. Pauline, who has been watching her unnoticed from the bed, remains "paralyzed" with fear. This scene was also staged by Braun as written.

Braun also incorporated these large scissors into the final tableau of he production in a chillingly graphic gesture of defiance. Bianca has come to see the world as a naked power struggle, and her only weapon left against the forces of cruelty and subjection is to remain "intact." She chooses to celebrate a white marriage in which her body becomes the embodiment of both innocence and death. Her only power lies in her final refusal to submit.

Braun combined the two last scenes of the play into one grotesque, Bosch nightmare of depravity and deformity. All the characters from the previous scenes entered the stage to sit around an enormous table that was covered with a white linen table cloth. Różewicz indicates that the wedding guests wear animal masks and growl, belch, bellow, and cackle. Some of the guests also wear masks with distended noses that resemble drooping phalluses, which they stick into the food on their plates. Braun carried this beast transformation to its most extended physical manifestation. He had his costume designer, Zofia de Ines-Lewczuk (with whom he was working for the first time), create costumes that grotesquely distorted and twisted the bodies of the

actors into the shape of wild and domestic beasts. It was in the midst of this vulgar "Garden of Delights" that Bianca took her final stand against the world of barbarism and uncontrolled appetite.

As the celebration came to an end and the moment of consummation drew near, the table was stripped of the wedding feast and the table was then transformed into a huge bed. The long table was built in sections, which could be dismantled and reassembled into a shorter, squarer shape. It was Braun's intention that not only should the table become a bed, but that the bed should also strongly suggest a funeral bier, draped in a white linen shroud that had been the table cloth. The guests moved away from the center of the stage into the shadows, but were still visible in the corners of the room. Benjamin then asked Bianca if she was ready. In the text, Bianca does not answer him, and begins to undress. Echoing her destruction of her trousseau in TABLEAU 10, she then takes each piece of her clothing, including shoes, stockings, and underthings, and tosses it into the fire burning in the hearth. She then takes the tailor's scissors and carefully cuts off her hair until only jagged tufts remain. She turns to Benjamin and whispers "I am . . . your . . . brother."[16]

Braun staged the scene as written, but he did not have Bianca throw her clothes into the fire after she had

undressed. And he added a chilling coda to Bianca's gesture of refusal to accept her fate as a woman and a victim. Naked, she stood in front of the mirror and masculinized herself by shearing off her hair. She then turned toward Benjamin and held the long scissors directly in front of her sexual parts. She turned the sharp points toward herself and spoke the final line. It was the consummate passive-aggressive act, a symbol of absolute defiance by a complete victim. Bianca now possessed her member which made her whole, and Benjamin's only choice was either to honor that wholeness, or violating it and her, kill her in cold blood. They remained frozen in tableau as the lights slowly dimmed to final black.

Is Bianca a stand-in for Poland as the eternal victim of the barbarous assault of history, and is her final gesture a barely sublimated symbol of collective resistance? Braun, as he often does when discussing the larger meaning of his productions, shies away from answering that question, not because he is being sly or evasive but because he insists that for the theatre to remain free and autonomous it must resist being pinned down as overt political statement or as a comment on current events.[17] He insists that he did not intend any subliminal message or secret code in the production, although those associations are there to be made if one wishes to see them. And certainly a play whose

central dramatic action is based on transmutation and whose images are laden with ambivalent and ambiguous sexual meaning, cannot be reduced to any one level of conscious meaning. Braun certainly intended the production to ignite his audience's sense of wonder and to empower their imaginative will. The performance was not about heroically futile, last-stand gestures of defiance by a helpless victim, but about the sheer power of imagination to erupt through reality and send it reeling. It was about the power of mind and will to overcome the hard resistance of an implacable reality that prevents people from living free, independent, and creative lives. And that reality exists in everyone's daily life. It is not a great historical cross to be born only by a select few.

Again, I would argue that Braun was less moved by possible deeper levels of meaning in the play than by the action of consciousness that enables an audience to make those poetic associations for themselves. He was intent upon exploring the principle of transmutation as a powerful spur to imagination and creative will. Braun wanted his audience to come to his theatre and experience it as a kind of crucible of consciousness, as well as a very positive, creative, freeing force in their lives. Spencer Golub, rather hyperbolically, sees virtually all of Polish history and Polish theatre (as well as most recent European historical and spiritual crises) erupting out of the play. It is, he says,

"an archetypal tale . . . a parable of power and powerlessness, a morality tale, a psychological monodrama, a political allegory, a private and national drama." He sees the play expanding beyond Polish national victimization to embrace the all-out horror of twentieth-century totalitarianism. In the image of Bianca's white nakedness and chopped hair, Golub sees "a corpse, ready for the gas chambers or already lying in a trench."[18]

Braun appreciated the power of White Marriage to release these latent layers of reality that accumulate in its potent sexual images. But he constructed his mise-en-scène to demonstrate not only that these layers or planes of reality impinged on each other, but that it was possible to move back and forth between them with dizzying ease and fluidity. The private, the social, and the phantasmagorical world interpenetrated and absorbed each other's power, and although the stage was divided into separate spheres they converged in the ether of consciousness.

Braun felt that the success of the production relied much more on the ability of his actors to navigate between those planes of reality on the stage than on his own ability to create a dynamic theatrical spectacle. He employed exercises and improvisations to help his actors free their bodies and voices (and egos) and transform themselves physically and vocally into grotesque, misshapen animals who utter vulgar and inhuman sounds. He also saw that the

central action of transformation would be most strongly and authentically communicated through the living presence of his actors. The audience would see the various planes of reality register in the actors' bodies as they slipped into altered states of hallucinogenic consciousness. Physical movement was especially important to convey the slow, ballet-like quality of the lurid fantasy scenes, most of which occurred in the dark forest among the black trees.

Braun based much of the physical work with his actors on the methods employed by Joseph Chaikin and the members of his Open Theatre in America. Chaikin based his approach to performance on the principle of transformation, and he considered a character or a role to be played, not as fixed and internal, but as flexible, loose, and physically determined. The transformational exercises that Chaikin's actors used enabled them both to slip easily and fluidly from one character to another, and also to retain a residue or rhythm of one character as they created a new one. Characters could also exist simultaneously in an actor, and the actor was also able to retain in his body the physical essence of a character even as he freed himself from it to create a new one.

It was essential since the three worlds or planes of reality of White Marriage--the bedroom, the parlor, and the forest--constantly impinged on one another and on the

psyches of the characters, that the physical movement of the actors between those planes be absolutely consistent and believable. Braun had already worked with the technique of transformation in his production of Old Woman in Lublin, and the actors he brought with him to Wrocław were quite prepared for the challenge of the work. And the other professional actors that he had assembled were eager to begin work, especially the members of the old Współczesny company, who had not been particularly challenged or stretched in the previous two seasons. All the actors welcomed the attention and the stimulation that Braun gave them, in large part because professional actors in Poland, as has already been mentioned, are often left to their own devices by directors more interested in creating vast spectacles and making "statements."

Braun did not suddenly abandon the methods of traditional theatre production in favor of radical experiment. First of all, the play begins in a very authentic, believable milieu, and Braun started his own work there as well. As he does in all his productions, he began to build the foundations of the performance by placing his actors in very real situations performing very real, authentic actions in which they could believe and invest themselves completely as characters. Only then did he begin to explore the other dimensions of the play and help his actors to expand their playing to fill them. He gently coaxed them by introducing

dream images and poetic associations to feel their way physically into other realms of the play. It was never a matter of applying or adapting a particular "style." The results were remarkably successful. The production opened on September 11, 1975, and played over 600 performances.

It was both a popular and critical success. In her review in Teatr, the critic Barbara Osterloff commends the production above all for its strong stylistic unity and theatrical coherence and clarity. As she says, "Fidelity to Różewicz's staging directions characterizes the entire performance."[19] And when Braun did extend the stage action or added theatrical embellishments beyond Różewicz's specific intentions, he did it "to clarify what is obscure and to bring transparency to that which could seem baffling."[20] She singles out the use of nudity in the scene between Bianca and Benjamin in the parlor, and the "ghastly half wedding-like, half funeral-like masquerade"[21] of the final scene as examples of the wide range of choices Braun made in his intelligent and faithful rendering of Różewicz's vision.

But the signal achievement of the production, especially when compared to the much more restrained world premiere in Warsaw, was the result of Braun's willingness to confront the very unsettling and explicit investigation of sexuality and erotic fantasy in the play. At Teatr Mały the production bordered on farce and, according to Marta Fik in a review in Theatre In Poland, actually "toned down the

author's requirements . . . and thus avoided anything that might cause a shock."[22] Fik also calls the play "a comedy." Braun was determined to explore the full range of the power of sexuality and eroticism and their capacity both to tease and to terrify. Osterloff particularly admires Braun's ability to convey the "threatening" (groźna) nature of eroticism at one moment, and then to reveal in the next its amusing capability to disarm and tease with its charms. Braun used nudity and explicit theatrical images to convey as directly as possible the uncomfortable but insistent reality of biological, reproductive functions and basic human urges, that is, the "facts of life."

It is important to point out that Braun did not overlook or disregard the comic elements in White Marriage, but balanced them, or rather juxtaposed them, with the darker moments of passion, violence, and shame. In fact, Osterloff found a number of quite funny moments in the production, in particular a scene between Benjamin and Pauline in which she playfully teased the young, naive fiance until he became completely fustered by her obvious, and precociously displayed, charms. Braun believes that titillation and embarrassed laughter are natural and understandable responses to the very unsettling subject of sex and bodily functions. He fully intended to illicit those uncomfortable responses in his audience. But if White Marriage could be called, at

least in part, a comedy, it is, as Braun made quite clear, a very dark and disturbing one.

But it was finally the dark, frightening, subversive power of eroticism and fantasy that focused and powered Braun's production of White Marriage. In his article "The Różewicz Theatre," Józef Kelera argues that the underlying, anarchic principle at work in the play is to "disclose the savage and bestial condition that lurks beneath the thin layer of culture . . ."[23] He argues further that Różewicz set the play in a more distant and genteel past specifically to enhance the contrast between that savagery and the thin, artificial layer of culture that attempts to contain and repress it. Braun saw eroticism in the play not only as a dark, destructive force, but as an untamed, unregenerate force of nature that defies any attempt by culture to contain it. It is primordial and libidinal. It induces dreams, fantasies, and hallucination, and it can be warped and twisted into psychic disfigurement. But it remains bubbling beneath the crust of culture, and when it is trapped under pressure it can erupt into reality. Bianca, as brutalized and violated as she is, finally envisions the shape of power in the form of a cold blade.

Osterloff sees the production finely balanced between artifice and nature, theatrical convention and stark realism. She locates the power of the production in the sharp juxtaposition of the operatic style of a previous epoch and

the "instincts and complexes which break those conventions."[24] And she finds the most authentic and convincing expression of that tension between convention and raw life in the performances of Braun's actors. She singles out Zbigniew Górski as Benjamin, Maria Zbyszewska as the Aunt, and Helena Rasiakówna as Pauline. But the war between culture and nature is brought to their most tragic impasse in the character of Bianca, beautifully and sensitively played by Grażyna Krukówna-Frymar, through whom the production comes alive as a "mono-vision" (mono-wizją) of terror, fantasy, and violence.

In her summary remarks, Osterloff commends the production finally for its overall sense of aesthetic balance and stylistic unity. This sense of unity, even of taste, in organizing and integrating all the bizarre elements of the mise-en-scène is especially important as an indication of the strong progress that Braun was making toward his conception of a theatre of space. The overall production design reflected his commitment to move beyond the staging theatre and even the poetic theatre, although the production certainly articulated a strong poetic vision. He had not wanted simply to imbue his production with an atmosphere of hallucination, or place it within a specific world, even if that world was a phantasmagoria. He wanted the very space to come alive and become charged like a conductive medium

through which the imagination of the actors and the audience could flow.

Braun had hired a painter, Piotr Wieczórek (a well-known Wrocław artist), to decorate the stage, and Zofia de Ines-Lewczuk to design the costumes, but the conception of the theatrical world of the play as a projection of time and space was entirely Braun's. Osterloff is impressed particularly with how the production "is thought out with precision and composed in each detail with care for the pictorial beauty of the whole."[25] And that "whole" was not simply an aesthetic unity, as in a fine painting, but the total objectification of Różewicz's vision as it emerged from the text into full theatrical life. Although intensely theatrical, the production was actually extremely simple. It did not depend on the traditional use of spectacle, but on a concentration and intensification of theatrical power into sharp, precise, disturbing images and potent gestures. The audience projected themselves into the theatrical space with a rush of personal association and libidinal connections.

Osterloff's description of the production of White Marriage as Bianca's "mono-vision" is very apt and also very telling because it prefigures the next major step that Braun would take in his project of re-theatricalizing the theatre space. White Marriage had cast the audience into a kind of libidinal sea, but with Bianca serving as a tragic guide and, at the end, a grim, immovable mooring of spiritual

sacrifice. The spectators saw the world through her eyes. The next step would necessitate creating a mono-vision directly on the stage for the audience to enter into, without the intervention of a tragic representative. Braun intended, in his next major production at Współczesny, to eroticize space in order to evolve a pure theatre action whose internal momentum or fundamental creative principle would be metamorphosis, or more precisely, "metempsychosis." This creative principle, although still deeply connected to basic natural urges and psychological forces, would no longer be tied to the personal tragedy of sexual awakening, repression, and self-alienation. It would expand its latent power to embrace collective life, that is, birth and death, procreation, the intimate love of parents and children, and the preservation and continuation of the life of the spirit. Braun intended to apply the poetic principle of metamorphosis to the reality of the life of the community and create a collective vision of transcendence and resurrection. His choice of material to create this vision would initially seem to be very bold and risky, but would eventually come to be accepted as quite logical and even inevitable.

Braun had read the linguistically dense and complex works of James Joyce during his student days, but he struggled through in the original English because no Polish translation existed at the time. He was deeply affected by the works, especially with his Catholic beliefs and

heritage. In the 1960s a brilliant bi-lingual poet named Maciej Słomczyński began to translate Joyce's prose works into Polish. Zygmunt Hübner staged the whole of Ulysses at Teatr Wybrzeże in 1969, and Jerzy Grzegorzewski staged the "Circe" episode in a very successful production at Teatr Ateneum in Warsaw in 1973.

The attraction of Joyce for the Poles is understandable. Both Ireland and Poland are overwhelmingly Catholic countries, and both have a long history of political oppression, having suffered humiliation at the hands of occupiers. They both possess a tremendous national pride that is expressed in a powerful, bardic literature. Both nations revere the past and their deep connection to an ancient ancestry, and they celebrate that connection in a poetry and theatre that is a continuation of an inspired oral tradition. Poland and Ireland are peasant countries who are haunted by the spirits of ancient heroes and noble legends. And the Poles, like Joyce, see history as a "nightmare" from which they are trying to awake.

Braun was initially inspired by Joyce for much simpler, but also more far-reaching reasons. As he would do with other works of literature such as Różewicz's Birth Rate and Camus's The Plague, he focused all the immense wealth of Joyce's dense language, characters, and philosophical ideas into a single propelling action: metempsychosis, the theory of the transmigration of souls. As Leo Bloom explains to

his wife Molly in Ulysses, it is the theory that we go on living in another body after death. Death is but one stage in the ongoing process of life. And while metempsychosis can manifest itself on the physical, historical, or cosmic plane, Braun saw it essentially as a force, latent within individual consciousness, to revitalize spiritual and imaginative life. It exists as the potential in each person to become a free, creative individual and re-envision the world. Braun's production of Anna Livia would be his major theatrical statement to end his first full season at Współczesny. It was also meant to be a powerful augur of things to come.

Braun originally envisioned the production as a condensation of several episodes of Ulysses. He commissioned an adaptation from Słomczyński, but after several weeks of rehearsal he suddenly came to feel that the entire project had been somehow misconceived and could not possibly work in performance. He suspended rehearsals and returned to Słomczyński with an idea and an outline of action that would make Finnegans Wake, and specifically the character of Anna Livia Plurabelle, the enclosing structure of the performance. Through the character of Anna Livia--the symbol of water and eternal life; of sexual and maternal love; and of the triumph of life over death--Braun was able to base the entire production on a universal cycle of birth, death, and final resurrection. The production grew out of and cohered

around this all-encompassing image of woman, water, and the eternal stream of life.

The new script, when completed by Słomczyński, was barely forty pages long, the length of a good one-act play. It was based primarily on sections of Finnegans Wake and Ulysses. Braun retained the three central characters from Ulysses--Molly, Leo Bloom, and Stephan Daedalus as the universal triumvirate of sexual and family love. He expanded this script through the inclusion of other poetic passages, literary motifs from Joyce, dance and musical rhythms, and, as in White Marriage, bold and startling theatrical effects. He began with a potent, all-encompassing theatrical image that would slowly grow and envelope the action and carry it forward. Zofia de Ines-Lewczuk (who also designed the costumes) arrived at a stage design for the production, based on long conversations with Braun and Słomczyński, that can only be described as a hugely expanded model of the entrance to the womb. The stage set was constructed to look like a cavernous space hung with and surrounded by enormous folds of soft, corrugated material. The entire stage was painted a dull greyish-white. In White Marriage the audience had entered into the hallucinogenic world through the small aperture of a young girl's violated self. In Anna Livia the entire stage opening would become the entrance to a fallopian passage of rebirth. This warm and (as the action begins) wet womb first gives birth to Anna Livia herself.

The opening scene of the performance was taken from the last chapter of Part 1 of Finnegans Wake, in which two washerwomen tell the story of Anna Livia. A large wooden washtub sat on the stage near an enormous, unevenly cut opening in the stage floor. Further downstage a man lay curled tightly into a ball. Two washerwomen entered and began to wash white sheets in the opening in the stage, which was now revealed to be filled with water. As they washed, the women began their story: "O tell me about Anna Livia! I want to hear all about Anna Livia. . . .Tell me all. Tell me now!" In English, the language of the women is intended to evoke the rippling, gurgling currents of the river. It is light and dancing, and flows with endless alliteration. Words are run together in a rhythmic, ritualistic pulse.

In Polish, Braun intended the language to be almost completely incomprehensible and to be heard mainly as the pure play of sound and gentle ripple of voices. The voices of the women mingled with the sound of water as it splashed and trickled in the on-stage river. In fact, Braun maintains that spectators who did not understand Polish had a more genuine experience of this opening scene than native speakers.

Suddenly, to the accomplishment of pulsating music, a beautiful naked woman rose slowly out of the water. The washerwomen grew ecstatic as their story conjured Anna Livia from the river and they began to celebrate their creation in

very uninhibited language. They danced unashamedly around Anna's beautiful naked body. They then proceeded to enrobe her body with long, white sheets, dancing around Anna in an abandoned celebration of female vitality and erotic power. The next act of creation would have to be the birth of her counterpart, her son/lover.

The male figure lying on the forestage had remained immobile throughout the opening scene, as inert as a stone. In her new white "wedding gown" Anna Livia moved downstage and began to breathe life into the male figure who lay as if in the womb, in a tight fetal position wrapped in himself. As the man slowly began to stretch and spread his arms and legs, Anna and the washerwomen helped him to discover the use of his limbs, his hands and feet, head, mouth, and fingers. Then Anna and her newly-born lover, who would shortly become her son Shem from Finnegans Wake, engaged in gentle and teasing erotic play and eventually wandered off into the depths of the uterine world. The washerwomen, having delivered their goddess, picked up their bundles of laundry and left the stage.

The stage darkened and as the lights began to come up an entire bedroom, complete with floor boards, large double bed, wardrobe, night table, and faded oriental rug, descended from the fly system and hovered in mid-air over the stage. The room was hung perpendicular to the stage floor so the audience's perspective was as if from far above

the bed. The spectators seemed to be floating a great distance over the bed, on which lay Molly and Leo Bloom. Anna Livia had undergone her first transformation from mother/lover into wife. (The same actress, Teresa Sawicka, played both parts.)

The suspended bed, according to Małgorzata Dzieduszycka, who wrote a description/analysis of the production for Theatre In Poland, was meant to create the sensation of the visual and emotional vertigo of a dream in which "we feel like Alice in Wonderland . . . "[26] Lying side by side in the bed, Molly and Leo were nevertheless isolated in their private, romantic reveries of love, and the scene grew out of their intimate thoughts. Molly's private musings came from the final chapter of Ulysses, the meditative "yes" monologue. Shem, who now had been transformed into Stephen Daedalus, entered into Molly's dream as he came on-stage and stood at the foot of the bed. Molly hovered over him in the bed, and she seemed also to be a presence in his own erotic dreams of a lover and mother.

Interrupting her reverie, Molly picked up a book of poetry and then Shem/Stephen was seen reading the same book. The dream then became Stephen's, and the washerwomen returned to the stage with a new incarnation of the female. But this time it was the ghost of Stephen's dead mother, wrapped in white sheets, who called out to him for devotion.

Both women, the voluptuous Molly and the spectral Mrs. Daedalus, hung suspended in Stephen's dream.

Suddenly an alarm clock went off and the dream evaporated into waking consciousness. Molly asked her husband the famous question concerning "metempsychosis." Bloom answered that it means the belief that "we go on living in another body after death, that we lived before . . ."[27] Molly then returned to her private fantasy with a snigger and a shiver of arousal: "I am all on fire inside."

As if summoned by Molly, a chorus of men in top hats and tails jazz danced on-stage with walking sticks. They began to sing frivolous, bawdy songs and Stephen recited a poem of erotic desire from Joyce's Chamber Music. The elegant male chorus seemed to inhabit both Molly and Stephen's dream, and now mother and son/lover appeared to be aware of each other in a shared reverie. Molly finished her erotic dream/fantasy that she had begun at the opening of the scene. As their mutual passion grew, Stephen took hold of the bed post and pulled the entire room down onto the stage floor. Bloom, having earlier dreamed of his one true love, Molly, now got out of bed to make room for his son/brother. But before Stephen could enter, the elegant male chorus passed one by one through Molly's bed in a hilarious parody of a sybaritic rite. At last he took his place in bed next to Molly, but suddenly the action reversed itself and ran backwards like a rewinding film. As the stage

darkened, the cuckolded Bloom appeared alone at the side of the bed with deer antlers on his head: Ulysses prepared for wandering and alone in his thoughts about his new family.

The entire bedroom scene, based on the perverse, illogical perspective of a dream, was theatrically enhanced by Braun through the use of both a male and a female chorus who danced, sang songs, and engaged in teasing, suggestive love play. The female chorus first appeared as Stephen entered Molly's dream, and they danced as chorus girls in a striptease show, exposing their breasts and enticing Stephen to dance with them. Dancing and singing was used by Braun throughout the production as a means of materializing the central action of transformation on the stage. He introduced music and dance rhythms at precisely those moments when a sublime mood or reverie could be suddenly subverted by a spirit of burlesque, frivolity, or camp. Dance allowed these transformations to grow out of and connect the stage action rhythmically, before the eyes of the audience. Solemn processing would dissolve into cabaret turns; dreamy swoons of reverie would descend into flagrantly lascivious gestures. As he had in White Marriage, Braun relied heavily on his actors to make these swift transformations seem fluid, consistent, and spontaneously generated. This element of physical and rhythmic transformation became a theatrical motif that materialized the metaphorical underpinning of the entire action of "metempsychosis." The eternal

rhythm of transformation would lead ultimately to a final vision of resurrection. Death and burial, however, would have to come first.

The final scene of Act I took place in a desolate graveyard at twilight. Upstage a huge stone Celtic cross stood against the deep blue cyclorama. In front of it lay an open grave. The male chorus carried the washtub from the first scene onto the stage like a casket, although it was uncertain who lay inside it. It was Anna Livia's son/lover/husband; that is, all men. Downstage, apparently impervious to the mourning, Anna Livia sat with other members of the male chorus who flirted with her and discussed her many charms. She was shielded from the site of death by the washerwomen and the female chorus, who held up sheets as a protective blind. Shem/Stephen, about to descend into the underworld, could only stand and peer over the white barricade, separated from his lover/mother for the first time.

It was Shem who would have to make the journey underground, and he discussed the prospect of life after death with his broth Shaun, who would soon go after him transformed as Bloom. Shaun spoke the lines from Finnegans Wake about the need for a telephone line to the coffin to talk to the dead. He then took a telephone out of his breast pocket and spoke inaudibly to his brother. Shem, standing at the edge of the grave, answered saying, "Yes, this is my funeral." The metempsychosis lines were repeated here by the

mourners and then Shem descended into his grave. Moments later, Anna Livia came upstage and followed Shem into the grave. The male and female chorus then joined in procession and exited together in a spirited music hall can-can to end the first act.

When the audience returned to the auditorium for Act II, they saw the stage divided horizontally into an upper and a lower plane. On the upper level, which stood at the back of the stage and was raised about ten feet off the stage floor, the mourners from the end of Act I gathered at the grave site. The huge Celtic cross, which had stood on the stage in the previous act, now sat on this upper level. In front of it Shem's grave opened and through it a ladder descended to the stage floor. The large open area of the stage had now become the underworld, although there was nothing specific to identify it as such except that it was, of course, located beneath the plane of the earth on which the mourners stood and could be reached through the grave by the ladder.

The initial action of the second act reduplicated the end of Act I, with Shem climbing into the grave and Anna Livia following. In the underworld, strange, mummified shades moved about like sleepwalkers wrapped with sheets. The washerwomen appeared there as well. Shem could be seen slowly moving around the stage as if "rowing on the River Styx" in search of Anna Livia. She also floated among the

shades and specters looking for Shem. Up above ground, as the mourners prayed, the sound high in the air of a brass band playing tinny funeral music frightened the crowd and, led by the presiding priest, descended one by one into the grave. The remainder of the act can only be described as a kind of phantasmagoric "vaudeville," to use Dzieduszycka's term, and the stage action is almost impossible, even for Braun, to reconstruct.

The basic action, however, which sustained and unified the complex choreography, scene fragments, and musical motifs was that of lost and wandering souls seeking to be reunited with lovers, family, and the community. The action evoked, at various times, the journey of Ulysses; the lost souls in the underworld of classical mythology; and even Christ's descent into Purgatory after His death on the cross. This action of lonely searching and eventual mutual rediscovery became, in essence, the universal model for the reunification of the community. As Anthony Burgess writes in his book ReJoyce, "Community is men . . . recognizing each other."[28] And it was this joyful act of recognition that allowed the final moments of the stage action to return to the world of the living, and even beyond that, to move onto a hopeful future.

After the mourners climbed down into the grave, drunken Shaun/Bloom entered searching for Shem/Stephen. He too

climbed into the grave, and when he reached the bottom of the ladder he was confronted by two menacing strangers in a mock interrogation. The interrogation echoed the scene in Old Woman in which the young poet offers a flower as identification to the "Guardian of Order." "Bloom" offers a false identity card: "Henry Flowers. No fixed abode." (This is in Joyce's text of Ulysses, but the connection with Old Woman seems coincidental.) It's worth noting, however, that in Hinduism the flower is the symbol of the soul. As in Ulysses, Bloom managed slyly to bluff his way out of arrest and, still drunk, danced away chanting the ballad of "Joking Jesus": "I'm the queerest young fellow that ever you heard, my mother's a Jew, my father's a bird." At that moment Bloom's father appeared out of the shadows to ask Bloom if he is in fact his son. As Bloom and his father talked, Anna Livia and Shem/Stephen moved slowly toward each other at the center of the stage and seemed, momentarily, to recognize one another. But because of fear and uncertainty, they were unable to touch, and again wandered off among the shades.

Shem/Stephen and Shaun/Bloom did recognize each other, and Shaun/Bloom spoke the critical lines from Hamlet: "I am thy father's spirit/Doomed for a certain time to walk the night . . ." This exchange initiates the famous debate in Ulysses in which Stephen Daedalus proposes that Shakespeare was his own father. Stephen argues that since the

playwright Shakespeare is playing the ghost of Hamlet's father and talking to his own son Hamnet (for whom Hamlet is named), then he is talking to himself as his own son. The proposition suggests that self-renewal is possible through an imminent act of creation.

In the transition into the debate the female chorus entered in their flowing white gowns and sang a hymn of praise to Bloom set to an oriental melody. As they sang they began a delicate strip-tease to reveal the music hall dresses from the first dream sequence underneath their gowns. They then formed with their bodies the living caryatids of a bar, and several of Stephen's friends bellied up to drink beer and debate the theory. Bloom, lying on the stage floor, was attended by Anna Livia, and once again Shem/Stephen, the lonely, alienated artist, was prevented from joining the debate with his friends by the wall of sheets held by the washerwomen.

One of the men did point to Stephen and remembered that he had borrowed money from his old friend, but that Stephen is now dead. The discussion then switched to the subject of Hamlet and the ghost of Hamlet's father. As they talked, Anna Livia picked up a beer mug from the bar, slowly walked over to Bloom, and tipped it into his ear. Anna had now become the corrupted queen who, in Stephen's doctrine of the father, is Ann Shakespeare, "born Hathaway" and the eternal seducer. Shem/Stephen was now allowed to join his friends

at the bar, but because he is dead no one could hear or see him. As the debate became more animated, Anna Livia suddenly remembered Bloom's explanation of metempsychosis, the possibility of life after death in a new body. The scene began to break up and dissolve, as the performers slowly retreated back into the womb-space of the stage.

The stage darkened briefly, and when the lights came up again Anna Livia, the washerwomen, and all the characters and the members of the chorus entered in procession dressed in the familiar flowing white gowns. The men wore plain white shirts and cotton trousers. They carried candles and sang a hymn of praise, initiated by Anna, that celebrated woman and water, the eternal symbols and source of life. Anna/Molly again spoke a passage from the final chapter of Ulysses, Molly's joyous "yes" monologue. As they sang, Anna led the reunited community up the ladder and out of the grave. The ladder was then pulled out of the grave and placed on end on the ground. It reached out of sight above the stage. As the company climbed the ladder and disappeared into the air, a beam of light from above bathed them in a shimmering white glow. Once they had ascended, Anna Livia took the ladder, placed it again into the grave, and descended into the underworld. As she did, the stage floor opened to reveal the river. The washerwomen reappeared to help Anna disrobe, and she then sank naked back into eternity. The washerwomen repeated the first lines of the

performance: "O tell me about Anna Livia! I want to hear all about Anna Livia! Tell me all. Tell me now!" The stage went to black.

Anna Livia represents Braun's most ambitious attempt to transform a complex work of poetic literature into a purely theatrical idiom, to translate the metaphorical act of transformation into the transmutational action of theatre. Finnegans Wake is Joyce's attempt to bring to life the "ab-nihilization of the etym," the recreation of meaning out of nothing. Although Joyce, in both Ulysses and Finnegans Wake, fragmented his fictional world into a myriad number of characters, literary motifs, philosophical arguments, and historical incidents, he constructed his narratives on a universal or mythical action that holds them together. Joyce celebrates the life principle of integration, community, and creativity. He elevates biology over history (as does Różewicz), community over repression, love over moral prohibition. In his books Joyce tells the story of the whole world and the entire human race, but he tells it using the simplest and most universal model of the community: the family. But it is an intimate, even Oedipal family, in which mothers and sons become lovers, and fathers and sons become brothers.

Braun distilled this fundamental model of the family as the representative of the human community and simplified it even further. The entire action of Anna Livia grows out of

the love and dreams of a single couple, a universal man and a universal woman. And the story they recreate is the universal action of birth, death, and resurrection; that is, "metempsychosis." In the performance Braun substituted for Joyce's constant shifting of narrative forms a theatrical kaleidoscope of continually transforming theatrical idioms. He juxtaposed lyrical monologues, prayers, erotic poems, hymns, bawdy cabaret ballads, and mundane conversation. These sharply contrasting idioms flowed into and out of each other as if carried along on Anna Livia's stream of eternal life. Although the action swung suddenly and often between the sublime and the ridiculous, gentle reverie and lascivious fantasy, the constant rhythm and pulse of life and love ensured its unity. Braun kept the action of Anna Livia focused, as he had in White Marriage, on a few key, recurring theatrical images and motifs that could stimulate and illicit ambivalent and contradictory responses. Those images included the body, white sheets, water, the womb, and dreaming or fantasy. These images conjured up both very spiritual and very erotic associations, as well as associations of birth and death, which acted upon the audience almost subliminally through visual free-association. Anthony Burgess describes Finnegans Wake as "the dream which is life,"[29] and Braun intended Anna Livia to be a collective dream of life dreamed by his whole audience. He wished

to awaken the unconscious memory of his community's shared life, and replenish it on the stage.

The production opened on June 16 (Bloomsday!), 1976, and was, like White Marriage, an enormously popular success. It ran for well over 150 performances. The critical reaction, while not exactly divided, was certainly not unanimous in its praise. The responses ranged from deep admiration, to admitted confusion, to wry skepticism. Józef Kelera considers Anna Livia to be one of the most thoroughly integrated and superbly acted productions that Braun mounted in Wrocław. He quotes the critic Marek Jodłowski who, writing in the journal Odra, praises the theatrical power of Braun's transformational vision to "connect vulgarity and sublimity, pathos and humor, and to show the deep truth of the cycle of birth and death, changeable and unchangeable human existence."[30] The critic Barbara Osterloff, writing possibly in reaction to the careful integration of elements that she had seen in White Marriage, finds Anna Livia to be only partially successful in its attempt to discover a "governing principle" (nadrzędną zasadą) for the performance.[31] Osterloff does admit that a large part of the difficulty of sustaining any kind of theatrical coherence stems initially from Joyce's own complex works and from Słomczyński's adaptations of them. She sees and appreciates the enormous task of translating Joyce's multifarious narrative and fictional techniques into the much more jarring action

of the kaleidoscopic shifting of theatrical idioms. She commends Braun for his highly "ambitious" (ambitne) work with very difficult and complex material, which she has, she says, become accustomed to seeing at Współczesny.

Osterloff also praises a number of individual scenes that she feels managed to capture the essential merging of universal myth and immediate reality in Joyce's works. In this respect, her critical observations reach a very astute understanding of what Braun was trying to achieve, not just with Anna Livia, but with his whole theatrical vision at this stage of his career. As he had in White Marriage, Braun attempted in Anna Livia to create a dynamic balance between intensely real and intensely poetic elements in the theatrical performance. He was also seeking to make these contradictory elements merge into and interpenetrate one another. At certain moments, according to Osterloff, the dynamically envisioned life on the stage became both "real and unreal here, concrete in details and, at the same time, poetical in mood."[32] Here, I think, the critic reveals a very sensitive perception of Braun's larger purpose in creating this kind of theatre performance and of the response he wanted to generate in his audience. Osterloff also feels that this fusion of raw reality and poetry, myth and carnality, found its most complete embodiment in Teresa Sawicka's portrayal of the character of Anna Livia in the actress's Wrocław debut. As Osterloff says, "She has found

for Anna Livia a God-like tone as well as that of a deep humanity, naive girlishness, and female maturity, and has created a character filled with sharp opposites, yet uniform and cohesive."[33] Osterloff's final judgment, like that of so many critics in Poland (and everywhere else), is positive but equivocal. She commends the project for being, if not entirely successful, "ambitious" and "controversial" (kontroversyjne). And as she says, "that is quite a lot" (A to przecież niemało).

Marian Sienkiewicz's review of the próduction deserves closer attention because it bears very much on the debate about Braun's position in contemporary Polish theatre and whether he was truly the bold innovator and determined experimentalist he maintains he was. Despite a certain surface daring, the entire production, according to Sienkiewicz, was really a very traditional, even old-fashioned performance that depended for its effects on a strong literary text and on the reliable machinery of stage illusion.[34] She calls Ines-Lewczuk's scenography a triumph of the "Renaissance-Baroque" stage. Sienkiewicz goes so far as to call Braun's Anna Livia an "ostentatious contradiction" (ostentacyjnym zaprzeczeniem) of the new theatre aesthetic, and she strongly argues that the production reaffirms the power of great literature and stage spectacle to move and delight an audience. As a traditional piece of theatre art, the performance is actually quite beautiful and brilliantly

theatrical. Sienkiewicz uses Braun to rebut Braun, and pronounces the theatre of literature and spectacle--the tradition of "monumental" theatre--to be alive and well.

Adding a further irony, Sienkiewicz contrasts Anna Livia with a production of Słomczyński's adaptation of the "Circe" episode of Ulysses that had been staged two years previously by Jerzy Gzegorzewski at his Teatr Ateneum in Warsaw. It was titled Bloomusalem, and in fact tried to create an environmental theatre event that used several different spaces in the theatre. The performance scrapped literature in favor of a theatrical composition based on visual collage, musical rhythms, and real life happenings.[35] Gzegorzewski used the stage, the lobby of the theatre, the cloak room, and the front vestibule to recreate the "Nighttown" scenes, and he even had Stephen and Leo Bloom exit the theatre, get into a black car, and drive off together to end the performance! Compared to this extremely unorthodox and very successful production, Braun's does appear to have been rather tame and old-fashioned. Had Gzegorzewski out-Brauned Braun?

Two things should be said concerning this apparent retreat by Braun into the security of the proscenium stage. First, Braun had retreated, and he did it intentionally. New to Wrocław, he had no intention of boldly leading his audience into new and uncharted theatrical territory. Braun wanted instead to reach out to his audience and invite them

into his theatre. He intended both White Marriage and Anna Livia to be what he called "theatrical feasts" for his new audience,[36] and to instill in that audience a sense of excitement, delight, and high expectation. From the very beginning Braun wanted his theatre to appeal to a wide public, to be truly popular in the broadest sense of that term. Indeed, Sienkiewicz commends Braun for making such difficult and complex fictional material accessible to a general audience, and for creating a rich, theatrical mosaic "in which one can, with no difficulty, read the philosophic and literary intentions of Joyce."[37] It should be mentioned that she admires the performance, allowing for its old-fashioned form, and describes it as "beautiful in its conventional theatricality, and very poetic."[38] I would suggest that perhaps Sienkiewicz's argument speaks not so much against Braun's supposed ostentatious contradictions than on behalf of the traditional theatre of mise-en-scène, which should return, if Sienkiewicz had her way, to its solid foundation in the tradition of great poetic literature.

The second thing that should be said, since it addresses Braun's supposed rejection of literature in favor of the new theatre of "collective creation," is that he never intended to abandon or devalue the written text as he evolved his unique vision of theatre. He is himself a practicing playwright and is devoted not only to theatrical writers but to poets and novelists as well. As he has said

in a 1986 article in Slavic and East-European Arts, "The beautiful, sophisticated, poetical, metaphorical, powerful, 'soundful,' meaningful WORD was always precious to me."[39] But he was struggling to find the right balance between the old theatre and the new, and the spoken text was an intrinsic, but not the dominant, element in his new theatre. Both Osterloff and Sienkiewicz applaud Braun for the beauty and expressiveness of the spoken language in Anna Livia, and he would continue to draw on other works of intensely poetic literature for future productions, in particular Forefathers' Eve, which he staged in 1978 and again in 1982. Braun sees a work of literature that he wishes to bring to the stage as an emerging action, which he tries to release into the concrete space and the real time of the performance. He tries to search out what is intrinsically theatrical in a work of literature, and the spoken word has tremendous, but not an exclusive, value in his productions.

Finally, it would be a great misapprehension to think that Braun had, for whatever reasons, returned to a more conventional, conservative form of theatre behind the proscenium opening in his first years in Wrocław. In fact, he began to make excursions out into the city to find new performance spaces and to rearrange the space inside Współczesny Theatre, in his first full season as Artistic Director. The second production that he directed was Norwid's Caesar and Cleopatra, which he staged in Wrocław's Museum of

Architecture. The Museum is part of a late-Medieval monastery located in the center of town. The monastery is composed of several buildings, one of which is a magnificent Gothic church. Braun staged the Norwid play in the huge meeting or dining hall, and he stripped the production down nearly to the level of a solemn recitation of the poetic text. There was virtually no set except for a large throne in the center of the room, and the space was divided in half with one side representing Rome and the other Egypt. The actors spoke the text illuminated only by candlelight. This production says a great deal about Braun's devotion to language, and the performance focused the attention of the spectators, who sat close to the actors in the huge white room, on Norwid's words. Unfortunately, Kelera feels that the production, being so stripped down, was somewhat dull.

Braun began to reconstruct the space inside his theatre as well. For his production of Mother Courage in the second season, he bisected the auditorium lengthwise with a long narrow ramp or runway that extended from the stage, over the seats, to the large entrance aisle located about two-thirds of the way to the back wall of the theatre. As the spectators filed into the auditorium, Mother Courage's wagon sat on this hanamichi-like runway and was pulled through the audience onto the stage as the performance began. Throughout the production characters made entrances and exits from this hanamichi. For Kattrin's drumming scene in which she

warns the village of the advancing soldiers and is shot to death by them, Braun had the actress rush from the stage out onto the runway and then lift up a section of it like a drawbridge. In effect, she took her defiant stand among the spectators and bravely beat her drum until a shot from the stage killed her.

But Braun's most radical, and most successful, rearrangement of the Współczesny space came during the 1977-78 season with his production of The Life of Alexander Blok, by Alexander Sztejn. Sztejn is a Soviet writer and Polish theatres were required to include a certain number of Soviet productions in their repertoire. Braun found the play interesting and was determined to give it more than a perfunctory staging. Blok chronicles the life of a dedicated and brilliant writer. To bring the audience into Blok's life as a writer, Braun recreated the study in which Blok worked in the most minute detail. The audience sat on risers on either side of the stage and observed at close range Blok's daily routine. This allowed the actors to perform in a very natural and extremely subdued manner. For the second act in which the director Meyerhold stages Blok's play, The Fairground Booth, the whole theatre was used. Meyerhold sat in the auditorium and directed the actors on the stage. The audience remained on the stage and enjoyed a very different perspective as they watched the empty auditorium become part of the performance. Most of the 1977-78 season was devoted

to Braun's production of the complete text of Forefathers' Eve, which was staged both in the theatre and in the Museum of Architecture over two days. This production will be examined more closely in the following chapter.

However one appraises individual productions that Braun undertook in his first years in Wrocław, they must be considered together as a stage in his long progress and as a preparation for the work to come. Even the admittedly more traditional productions of White Marriage and Anna Livia must be seen as experiments in the use of physical space, theatrical motifs, music and movement. It must be kept in mind that Braun was attempting to create not only a new kind of theatrical vision, but a very real theatre that would serve Wrocław as a vital, accessible, popular institution. This meant seeking both new possibilities and a sense of permanence, a feeling of stability and continuity. All the work that Braun did in these first years in Wrocław laid the groundwork for the most unorthodox and ambitious project that he would undertake in nearly twenty years' work in the professional theatre in Poland. At the very end of 1979, Braun finally gave birth to Różewicz's Birth Rate and turned, not only the stage of Współczesny, but the entire theatre building into a womb for the creation of a collective, participatory performance event. The performers and spectators would finally become one integrated community.

CHAPTER VI:

GIVING BIRTH TO THE THEATRE OF THE COMMUNITY

Braun's production of Różewicz's Birth Rate: A Biography of a Play for the Theatre was an event waiting to happen. It was only a matter of determining when. Since the production of The Interrupted Act in 1970, it could be said that Braun's theatrical vision and Różewicz's text were launched on trajectories that would sooner or later cause them to collide. The performance of Birth Rate virtually recapitulated the process of creative gestation that brought The Interrupted Act into the theatre. The text can even be considered a rewriting of The Interrupted Act and a reinvestigation of its central creative crisis, but with the intellectual stakes set much higher and the risks involved in producing it made much greater, both for Różewicz and for Braun. Birth Rate continues to struggle with the impossible task of finding an appropriate dramatic form or theatrical vehicle that will faithfully translate the life of Różewicz's mind onto the stage. But that struggle no longer camouflages itself behind the intellectual archness of The Interrupted Act.

Through The Interrupted Act Różewicz seemed to be teasing a potential director, as if to say, "Of course you cannot stage this text, but go right ahead if you think you can." But with Birth Rate he has dropped the pose of diffidence and become almost desperately direct. The vision itself has taken over command of Różewicz's consciousness, as if to say, "This work is an artistic impossibility but it must, somehow, be done!" The Interrupted Act takes the reader into the intellectually intricate workings of Różewicz's mind. But in Birth Rate a theatrical vision has taken on a life of its own inside the poet's head, and he has been rendered powerless to control it or check its growth as it threatens to crack the skull of his consciousness. Birth Rate was actually begun several years before The Interrupted Act, but because of the power it exerted on Różewicz's imagination it was not published in its present essay, or precis, form in Dialog until 1968, four years after the publication of Act.

It would take more than a decade after its publication to finally reach the stage. Braun approached the text in much the same way as he had The Interrupted Act, and for virtually the same reasons. He made the decision to mount Birth Rate shortly after he was named Artistic Director of Współczesny Theatre, but he would wait several more years to produce it. In 1975 he had begun discussing the possibility of staging the text with the noted literary critic Kazimierz

Wyka of Jagiellonian University, who had published several essays on Różewicz and on Birth Rate in the early seventies. Braun had, of course, discussed the possibility of staging it with Różewicz, who urged him to do it at some point at Współczesny. When he finally did project a tentative date for its production (the 1979-80 season), he spent two years devising a basic scenario for the performance, just as he had with The Interrupted Act. And when rehearsals began in the spring of 1979, he also evolved much of the performance through improvisation and extensive discussions with his acting company, as he had in Lublin in 1970.

But most important, Braun chose Birth Rate, as he had chosen The Interrupted Act, because it forced him to face himself as a director and to rethink and re-envision the whole nature of the theatre experience, both how it could be created and how it could fully engage its audience as participants. Braun had reached a temporary impasse in Wrocław, just as he had in Lublin, once he had established himself at Współczesny as a bold and highly accomplished director and astute theatre manager. Through the extremely successful and critically respected productions of White Marriage in 1975 and Anna Livia in 1976, and also through Braun's close collaboration with Helmut Kajzar, who was both a talented director and playwright, Współczesny Theatre had, in three years, succeeded in clearly defining its artistic character under Braun's leadership. According to Józef

Kelera, that indelible character was formed by a young and bold acting company, a provocative and somewhat unconventional repertoire, and a clear and ambitious theatrical vision.[1] The theatre was highly individualistic without being conspicuously or self-consciously "experimental." It managed in its productions to achieve a strong balance between tradition and innovation, and between wide popular appeal and critical respectability.

But problems arose even during these early years of success. Braun had taken a very large share of the burden of directing Współczesny productions on himself (three out of six new stagings each year for three seasons), and consequently had not established a wider network of directors with whom he could share directorial responsibilities and to whom he could delegate artistic authority. But during the 1978-79 season, his fourth, Braun directed only one production, a new play by Tymoteusz Karpowicz titled When the Angel Arrives (Kiedy przychodzi anioł). He also spent several months abroad during the season and invited a number of foreign directors to stage productions at Współczesny as part of, according to Kelera, an ill-advised "cultural exchange" (wymiany kulturalnej). Kelera also offers the suggestion that an unfortunate choice of repertoire and actors, along with Braun's absence, contributed to the diffusion of creative energy and collective commitment in the theatre in 1978-79. Kelera also maintains that a crisis

of some sort was an inevitable and even natural stage in Współczesny's (or any theatre's) evolution.[2]

In the 1979-80 season, the "moment" for Birth Rate had come. The production would enable Braun to regain the firm artistic control of the theatre that had begun to slip from him, and would also force him to venture out into new theatrical territory with his audience. Braun's greatest successes of the previous four seasons had been achieved primarily within a traditional, proscenium-enforced arrangement of theatrical space. As in Lublin, the pressure to maintain the caliber and consistency of his productions and sustain a high level of audience appeal made radical experiment a risky exercise. But as I pointed out in the previous chapter, Braun did continue his exploration of physical space as the essential medium for the creation of community among performers and spectators. And he did, in fact, manage to stage some performances in Wrocław outside the main theatre.

He made his boldest excursion out into the city in the 1977-78 season for his production of the most venerated text in Polish cultural life: Forefathers' Eve. The play was a smart, if daring, choice. Since the epoch-making production by Konrad Swinarski in 1973, which was in its own way a total environmental performance that used several locations in the theatre and placed the spectators in the midst of the action, every new attempt to stage the play was inevitably held up in comparison, and usually suffered by it. A fresh

theatrical vision would be required to break new ground, but such a revered text would not suffer tampering for the sake of slick theatrical effects. Braun was both exceedingly faithful and extremely free in his approach to the play. It was performed virtually uncut and was embellished, for the most part, with only minimal scenery. It was staged both in the theatre and in several locations in the city. It was divided into two parts and the entire production lasted nearly eight hours. It was possible to see the performance over two consecutive evenings or in one day with a dinner break.

Braun set out to combine a sincere reverence for Mickiewicz's poetry and messianic spirit with a complete indifference to the tradition of monumental staging. According to Kelera, Braun wanted to adapt the "open" structure of the text, which was composed by Mickiewicz over many years and ranges widely across time and space, to the new techniques of the "open" theatre movement. He intended to make a clean break with the recent past and create a Forefathers' Eve that would be a sacred and even primitive celebration, as well as a very contemporary, social experience for his audience, a kind of Polish "happening."

Forefathers' Eve is divided into four major parts, although they are not numbered in the order in which they were composed. Parts II and IV were published as long poems, cast in dramatic form in 1823. Part III was not

written until after the failed Insurrection of 1830. It is based on Mickiewicz's experience as a prisoner in Wilno, where he was incarcerated by the Russians in 1823-24. (Part I was discovered, as yet unpublished, after his death.) Part II is based on the actual ceremony of Forefathers' Eve, which had its origins in pre-Christian, pagan rites. In these rites the common folk, lead by a wizard or sorcerer, would gather in churches or graveyards to speak with the spirits of the dead. They were a kind of primitive seance. The participants often brought food as an offering to the deceased. There is a strong atmosphere of clandestine activity in these rites since, even in modern times, the church and civil authorities frowned on this throwback to pagan ceremonies and supposed black magic rituals. Braun wanted to intensify this atmosphere of "underground" secrecy in the performance of Part II.

Braun first staged the entirety of Part IV, along with some fragments of Part I, on the stage of Współczesny. Part IV is essentially a long monologue delivered by Gustav, who has not yet been transformed into the hero/savior Konrad, to an old hermit. The monologue recalls Gustav's idyllic childhood and laments the lost love of his youth, which has driven him to the edge of despair. It is an extremely private scene, and Braun staged it very simply and with a minimum of props and scenery. The audience then was instructed to leave the theatre and walk to the Museum of

Architecture for the performance of Part II. The Museum was about a mile, or a good twenty-minute walk, from the theatre. This journey, in effect, became the "pilgrimage" to the rite of Forefathers' Eve. Braun had wanted the spectators and the actors to walk together, but the milicija, or city police, would not permit such a "disruptive" public gathering. Thus the walk to the Museum became a spontaneous theatrical symbol of the authorities' attempt to suppress the spirit of community in Poland in the late seventies.

All of Part II was performed in the nave of the medieval gothic church that had been part of the monastery. The church strongly evoked the atmosphere of sacred mystery and secret celebration that Braun wanted to capture in Part II. According to Kelera, Braun acknowledged and drew inspiration both from Swinarski's environmental production, and also from Kazimierz Dejmek's use of old Polish mystery play forms and folklore traditions in his productions of the classics in the 1960s.[3] In 1962 Dejmek had staged The Story of the Glorious Resurrection of Our Lord, a seventeenth-century miracle play, in a rustic Nativity scene or crèche, in order to capture the simplicity and naiveté of earlier folk performances.

Braun attempted to create a similar atmosphere of medieval mystery pageants in his mise-en scène, but he also extended it to envelope the audience in the ceremony. Actors and spectators shared the same space in the church,

and the action grew out of the midst of the audience. Braun commissioned Peter Schumann of Bread and Puppet Theatre to design huge puppets and masks to represent the conjured spirits of the dead. (Braun had seen Schumann's work when the director visited Wrocław with his theatre in 1969, and when Braun traveled to America in the 1960s.) In his use of Schumann's puppets, as well as in his earlier use of the huge doll-like effigies in The Wedding and in White Marriage, Braun was drawing on the very old popular tradition of the szopka, or puppet show, in which religious stories, such as the birth of Christ, are enacted by puppets. Not only Braun and Dejmek, but Leon Schiller and many other directors and playwrights before them drew on this native folk tradition to reinvigorate modern Polish theatre and reconnect it to this national heritage. The second half of the performance was taken up with Part III, which was staged at the theatre with minimal scenery and affects, and then the audience walked, once again, to the Museum, where a series of poems, written by Mickiewicz as a kind of epilogue to the entire work, were recited by the actors in the exhibition room, lit only by candles.

By drawing on Schumann's dual ethos of "bread" and "puppets," Braun had attempted in Part II to crystallize the celebration of community as both a spiritual and social experience, complete with a secular communion of bread and apples shared by the actors and spectators. The overall

production, Kelera felt, demonstrated a sincere and ambitious attempt to tap into and release the spiritual and communal energy of Mickiewicz's text. It nevertheless strained a "tautological" (tautologicznym) tendency when staging Forefathers' Eve to overlay the genuine experience of sacred community, already alive in the expression of the inspired poetry, with the self-conscious theatrics of a secular ceremony that had simply appropriated the form of centuries-old folk theatre traditions. The production verged on becoming a parody of itself and of the true spirit of celebration because the spectators simply "performed" the rite as willing actors in an ersatz Mass, and not as genuine participants.

It is a point well taken, and it was a problem that could not be solved until Braun could work through it with his production of Birth Rate. It should be mentioned, however, that despite its failure to fully realize Braun's vision of a theatre of the community, Forefathers' Eve still managed to break new ground in Polish theatre. In her article, "Polish Stage Design Over the Past 35 Years," published in Teatr (the last of three articles on Polish stage design), Elżbieta Zmudzka singles out Braun's production as representative of a new stage of theatrical design in Poland that attempts to "define the terrain of the theatrical happening, hence the action to the same degree as that of the presence of the audience."[4] But if Braun opened up new

theatrical terrain with Forefathers' Eve, he had still not solved the contradictions intrinsic to the theatrical experience, specifically the denial of autonomy and free will that spectators must be allowed to exercise if they are to become authentic participants in the event. (The same futility in the face of this nearly unresolvable contradiction had led Grotowski to abandon the theatre altogether.)

But for Braun the problem was not one of expunging artifice and transcending theatre in order to create a new form of secular rite or spontaneous social event. For him the problem was always one of commingling the real and the unreal in the action of his theatre and enabling them to create a kind of chemical reaction in the consciousness of his audience. Like Bertolt Brecht, Braun wanted his audience to understand that the world he was bringing to life in his theatre was undeniably real, but that it was also a reality that had to be investigated, questioned, and reinvested with meaning. An audience had to be made acutely aware of the artificial construction of this stage world, even as they are asked to become inhabitants of it.

Braun believed (and still does) that it was possible for people to come together, as actors and spectators, in free assembly, and engage in a shared, social action--talking, eating, singing--as part of the performance. This social act would be nothing more than what it was but would be, at the same time, a genuinely creative act. With Birth

Rate Braun would take the final step toward a kind of theatre event in which the entire assembly would participate socially, intellectually, creatively, and even physically within a shared theatrical space. Birth Rate took Braun and his actors and audience back into the theatre on Rzeźnicza Street, and turned the entire building into a "living organism" that bred the performance within its collective body each night.

Birth Rate, one could argue, is the only theatrical medium through which this collective life could be created. The text is a living model of the difficult act and prolonged process of creation. It is not a finished play or even a theatrical scenario, but the intensely personal record of a painful labor of the imagination to give birth to a work of art. Since writing The Interrupted Act, Różewicz had been struggling to create a form of theatre that could deliver the act of consciousness directly onto the stage. Or rather, he sought to find a way to take an audience, through the medium of theatre, directly into the labyrinthine workings of his own mind as it conjured up images, ideas, and data and discharged them in startling new constellations. Like The Interrupted Act, Birth Rate could be called "an intense cerebral scenario," but it is a scenario whose reigning creative principle is that of "unchecked growth," and the only logic of its action is that it cannot be contained or stopped.

No modern writer has more openly confessed his failure to finish a play than Różewicz. And Birth Rate is his most unsparingly honest confession of his failure to render the life of his mind in the form of a play. But the text is also a desperate call for help to deliver the poet of an overwhelming theatrical vision that had been growing inside him for years with a wild life of its own. When it was finally "given birth" at Współczesny Theatre at the end of 1979, it represented twenty years of prolonged gestation.

The text began only as the vague, amorphous image in Różewicz's mind of a living, growing mass of human life that breeds unchecked until it finally "destroys all forms" because it "cannot be bottled up" by strict laws, conventional morality, or political repression.[5] As he would later write in White Marriage, the true forces of creation and destruction originate deep inside the human organism, and all other external forces--political, cultural, or social--are simply manifestations of that internal power. In one of his best-known short stories, "An Unfinished Examination," Różewicz describes the poet as a mother giving birth. The impregnation may occur through a dream, a fleeting thought, or a glimpse of scenery, and that seed of inspiration is received through the "open wounds" of the poet's soul.[6] The anonymous father-stimulus will disappear, but the poet-mother must live with the seed growing inside. What had begun as a potent image out of which a

poem might be generated soon began to dictate the whole process of creation as it bred beyond Różewicz's power as a poet to control it. He had been impregnated by Birth Rate. In an interview with Halina Filipowicz some time after the opening of the production Różewicz said, "Do you know how hard I worked not to write Birth Rate?"[7]

It wasn't that Rożewicz could not write Birth Rate. He could not stop writing it. Once opened, he could not stop the floodgates as impressions, images, ideas, and data flowed through his consciousness as a poet. As soon as he began to work on Birth Rate he proceeded to amass documentation to substantiate his initial vision of breeding, unchecked growth. Then life itself quickly took over his imagination. He collected hundreds of newspaper and journal articles with titles such as "5,000 Infants Born Every Hour," pamphlets from Planned Parenthood, brochures, and how-to sex manuals. He corresponded with a specialist in demography, read technical handbooks and marriage guides. This mass of documentation very quickly mounted up to what would have been eventually hundreds of pages of manuscript. The facts of life themselves, as Różewicz records them in Birth Rate, were becoming a living, breeding mass.

This mound of statistical data did not suffocate Różewicz or paralyze his imagination. On the contrary, it produced in his consciousness an equally large mass of images, scene fragments, and surreal scenarios. The data

became "statistical manure" in which poetic and theatrical images sprouted in his imagination. The article "5,000 Infants Born Every Hour" produced a bizarre scene in which "[b]abes lie on tiered wagons arranged in rows like rolls in a bakery," and are pushed around by white-uniformed nurses in faster and faster circles.[8] The macabre mise-en-scène for this scene had been generated by the image of a conveyor belt or assembly production line that Różewicz had seen in Renaissance paintings where human beings are transported to their appointed site of eternal damnation by armies of devils. This spooky Hieronymous Bosch image of human destiny as an endless conveyor belt of bodies also contained an element of diabolical farce that would become a crucial component of Braun's own mise-en-scène. This surreal Bosch scene would compel him to go literally underground in his theatre.

As Różewicz pored over the growing mass of statistical data and records of scientific research, he was startled to discover how little any of it had to do with the simple but blatant fact of spontaneous and uncontrolled life-growth. Much of the research seemed to be wildly contradictory, inaccurate, or just weirdly beside the point. Even the cold objectivity of scientific data had been infected, or impregnated, by the stimulus of the birth process. This realization by Różewicz that clinical study was powerless to manage, control, or even comprehend the rampant lifeforce

produced a lurid image of a vault containing large vessels or amphoras. These amphoras held the live, naked bodies of women which were to be examined by the scientist. Różewicz included in the text of Birth Rate some bits of poetic dialogue for these women-vessels to speak from their glass receptacles, and Braun included them in his staging of this scene.

Różewicz also had envisioned a conversation between the "Scientist-Hermit," who is a "pseudo schizophrenic," and his "pseudo nurse" inside the vaulted cell of the laboratory. Różewicz wanted to evoke the secretive atmosphere surrounding the clinical investigation of the birth rate. This scene, set deep in the bowels of the earth, was also intended by Różewicz to convey the sense of isolation and withdrawal from the world that characterizes such clinical dissection. The scene finally was meant to capture the sense of eerie apprehension that beyond the stone walls of the "bunker" another world is "growing, bubbling, and multiplying."[9] This laboratory scene is one of the most completely realized in the text of Birth Rate, and would become the centerpiece of the action during one stage of Braun's production.

These initial scenes and bizarre theatrical images, which continued to breed Różewicz's vision of Birth Rate, served as a kind of perverse shock treatment for the audience's imagination. They were meant to impregnate the

audience with the seed of the living, growing mass that explodes all boundaries of conventional thought, civilized behavior, and enforced regulation. These scenes helped to create an appropriately grotesque and hallucinogenic atmosphere which would prepare the audience for what began as, and would continue to be, the core action out of which the entire vision of Birth Rate erupted. This core scene was to take place inside an actual trolley or streetcar compartment which would be constructed on stage and rendered accurate in every detail. The action would be precipitated by a growing crowd of people who would pile into the compartment until they became metamorphosed into one huge, writhing, human mass that would literally burst the walls of the trolley car. What intrigued Różewicz most was not the violence of the action itself but the progressive disruption and eventual complete breakdown of conventional and civilized behavior that would culminate in rampant hysteria and physical violence. As more and more people force their way into the compartment, passengers persist in carrying on polite conversation, even as they are pushed and shoved into embarrassingly impolite postures against each other's bodies, between each other's legs, and near more personal, and usually more carefully guarded, areas of the anatomy.

The mounting chaos of the action also forces individual passengers to relinquish, or to have stripped from them, their composure or posture of authority and dignity.

Różewicz envisioned the sanctimonious figure of a "High Priest" who would enter the compartment and begin to utter pious platitudes, give blessings, and pat little children on the head. But he is knocked to the floor in the mad rush, and when he refuses to stop droning on he is hoisted onto the baggage rack above the heads of the passengers. From there he "babbles on in an unctuous voice about motherhood, the rhythm method, and the sinfulness of contraceptive devices."[10] The chaos of pushing and shouting reaches a climax as the walls of the compartment buckle and the mass of humanity bursts through. This scene provided the climax of Braun's own theatrical scenario, which he constructed as an action of mounting physical pressure fed by the rampantly expanding birthrate.

Różewicz realized very early on in the writing of Birth Rate that no theatrical form, however loose or expansive, would be sufficient to contain the sprawling, eruptive action of his prospective drama. He confesses that he would have much preferred just to "improvise it all with a theatre group," but he did not have his own "theatre or director."[11] But Różewicz was far less concerned with finding a particularly sensitive director or acting company than he was with overcoming the inherently tyrannical and delimiting form not only of traditional dramatic structure but of the theatre building itself. The very notion of going to the theatre in the evening to sit and observe a performance of a

play called Birth Rate would imprison his theatrically sprawling vision in the very confines of time and space that he was struggling to explode.

Różewicz dismisses the prevailing notion that a play must be strategically constructed to provide a beginning, a middle, and an end. He deeply distrusts the theatre event because it conspires to enforce that rigid structure. One enters the theatre, sits quietly and passively for a time watching the performance, then rises and leaves. Różewicz had been struggling, not only in Birth Rate but in all his previous works for the theatre, to find a theatrical form that would impress upon the consciousness of an audience the progressive, cumulative affect of the "duration of a certain situation," rather than the development of a linear action. It is the unavoidable termination of the theatre performance that Różewicz sees as the death of his works for the theatre, whose critical structural component is that they "have no ending."[12] But a performance must, at some point, end.

The theatre performance tyrannizes not only time but space through its strictly enforced boundaries that separate actors and spectators, and through its hierarchical division of the physical space into stage, auditorium, lobby, scene shops, and lounges. These boundaries are not only structurally enforced through the presence of the proscenium arch and the seats that are bolted to the auditorium floor, but

also culturally through the aesthetic investiture of each area of the theatre with its specialized function. One must observe a proper decorum when entering the performance space, and restrict one's smoking or drinking to certain prescribed times in the lobby or lounge. One must never venture onto the stage itself or into the secret recesses of the building where the art is mysteriously created. This compartmentalizing of time and the hierarchical division of space conspire to sanctify that space and serve the tyranny of illusion, which Różewicz called in Birth Rate the "exterior theatre." One can easily understand his apprehension about releasing his theatrical vision, whose entire action embodies "the very process of bursting, the crumbling of the walls . . .,"[13] into a theatre.

Różewicz's major concern was to actualize this "bursting" vision in a theatrical form which would extend the life of his mind onto the stage. He needed the action of theatre to allow his vision to expand and flow beyond the enclosed space of his mind into the physical space of the theatre as a substantiated act. It would be futile to attempt to "translate" the images of his continually metamorphosing imagination into a suitable theatrical language. The creative birth of this open-ended, incomplete, and uncompletable form that governs Birth Rate demanded that its theatrical life recapitulate and extend the very process of Różewicz's consciousness as an action that breeds itself

through time and space. Birth Rate would require, not only a new kind of stage vocabulary, but an entirely new theatrical thought process as well.

The final irony of Birth Rate is that despite Różewicz's distain for theatre and its insidious power to induce imaginative stupefaction in an audience, it is the one medium in which his living text could survive and continue to breed itself. There is a cunning paradox in the nature of theatre performance that draws Różewicz irresistibly to it--it is both implacably real, that is material, and also diabolically artificial, a product of pure illusion. Traditional theatre practice employs mimesis to pretend that that contradiction does not exist. It blurs the edges of theatrical creation and enters a murky territory somewhere between real reality and a true unreality. Even the avant-garde theatre has struggled throughout our century to come to terms with this stubborn contradiction between theatre as substantial act and theatre as conceptual construct. The audience is condemned to wander in a limbo between authentic event and prefabricated performance.

Różewicz's art would eventually come to thrive on that contradiction. Birth Rate feeds on it. Materiality and artifice could be made to engage in a kind of theatrical sparring. They could bounce off each other and goad each other's expressive power. Różewicz was drawn to the

material medium of theatre because of its innate tendency to actualize thought in time and space, to "carnalize" the mind, to borrow Susan Sontag's description of Artaud's theatrical vision. In his pursuit of what he called his "invisible theatre" in The Interrupted Act, Różewicz was driven by a need to move beyond the safe bounds of dramatic language toward a mute poetry composed of desperate gestures, raw corporeal being, and crude objects. In the theatre Różewicz found a dense, rude language that could reveal those "moments of silence" that constitute what he calls in Birth Rate the inexpressible "interior theatre" of our lives. The theatre possesses a stubborn materiality that defies attempts at signification, and Różewicz found he could mold it into a concrete stage poetry of objects, ideas, and images that emerges with startling freshness and resonates with potential meaning.

Paradoxically, it is Różewicz's sly awareness of the power of theatrical artifice that enables him to activate and manipulate this stage poetry. He raises the demons of illusion in order to exorcise them, or rather to make them serve as his familiars. By continually drawing attention to the transparent devices of illusion and subverting the smooth surface of artifice, Różewicz maintains the volatile, shifting relationships of his theatrical constellations. He releases a stage vocabulary made up of bits of biography, history, literature, journalism, and free-associational

thought into a field of intellectual play. This free play of artifice substantiates Różewicz's insistent claim that his must be a theatre of the mind bodied forth, a living construct of consciousness.

With his productions of The Interrupted Act and The Old Woman Broods, Braun had gone a long way toward realizing this "realistico-poetic" vision of Różewicz's theatre. He had broken through the proscenium wall, and even the walls of the theatre. He had dismantled the entire machinery of stage illusion and reassembled it into dynamic theatrical collages that enveloped the spectators physically, as well as intellectually and spiritually. And with White Marriage he had given substantial form to Różewicz's densely metaphoric vision of reality in which the private world of imagination, fantasy, and fear and the public world of social and political intercourse infect each other in a constant state of interpenetration. White Marriage exploded the world as an objectified set of observable phenomena or coherent processes, and opened it up as a dense field of simultaneous, synchronized states or conditions of being that human consciousness must arbitrate. And Birth Rate posits the world and the self not as separate spheres of existence but as the polar terms in an act of creative negotiation that constitutes consciousness. To be true to the spirit of the text, a performance of Birth Rate would have to invite an audience not just to share food or songs,

but to think through the profound implications of Różewicz's theatrical vision.

Despite his significant achievements, Braun still had not overcome this final obstacle to a true "collective creation" in the theatre--the active participation of the spectators, not as secular communicants but as conscious, creative beings. The spectators still remained fundamentally passive, even if their mobility and proximity to the action engaged them on a more personal level than conventional theatre. The final step would be to mobilize the consciousness of the spectators and take them inside the action of theatre to participate in the living process of its creation.

The production of Birth Rate gave birth to the theatre of the community. Very early on in his writing Różewicz had realized that the only way he could successfully deliver himself of the burden of his vision would be to "transmit it by direct contact with living people."[14] "Living contact" would become the fundamental creative principle upon which the performance would be constructed and the medium through which that performance would reach out to the audience each night and draw them into the action as co-creators. Together the performers and spectators would "think through" Birth Rate, its personal implications and consequences, and its value as a source of collective power. Birth Rate was given birth and bred deep inside the collective body of

Współczesny Theatre in order to both release its forces of creation and of destruction.

Once Braun had determined to stage the text, he began slowly to devise a skeletal action for the performance. For two years it germinated and in the spring of 1979 it was ready for the acting company. The essential action contained the scene in the scientist's laboratory and the climactic streetcar scene. Braun also introduced pieces of other literary works by Różewicz, including a short scene from The Old Woman Broods. He also incorporated two brief scenes, one from Chekhov's The Cherry Orchard and another from Joseph Conrad's Lord Jim, which Różewicz had described in detail in Birth Rate as emblematic of those excruciating "moments of silence" that reveal the inexpressible "interior theatre" of our lives.

Braun devised a physical action for the performance in which the audience would proceed as a body (and at times separated into smaller groups) through time and space and become totally immersed in the process of breeding Birth Rate as a collective creation. The movement of the audience through the dense theatrical environment, located in the rooms and passages of Współczesny Theatre, recapitulated the workings of Różewicz's consciousness as it waded through the flood of images, scenes, information, and ideas. Braun began to experiment with the creative potential of physical action in a series of improvisational rehearsals that were

conducted by himself and his company of actors in an old railway carriage which stood on a siding in the Wrocław train station. His cast for Birth Rate included members of his permanent ensemble of actors--Marlene Milwiw, Halina Rasiakówna, Zbigniew Górski, and Andrzej Bielski--who had been working together during Braun's entire tenure at Współczesny.

These rehearsals were attended only by Braun and his actors, and the improvisations involved recreating the streetcar action as far as possible as an actual situation, with the actors assuming various social roles and entering the compartment in different orders. Braun and his actors discussed the subtle way in which different social types, entering the compartment in a different order or frequency, altered or aggravated the pressure being built as the actors pushed and shoved their way in. The climactic scene of the production grew directly out of these improvisational rehearsals.[15] This stage of rehearsal was interrupted by summer vacation and then a European tour, and when work was resumed in November, 1979, rehearsals were attended also by the stage designer Krzysztof Zarębski, the composer Zbigniew Karnecki, and by Różewicz himself.

After a month's rehearsal in the theatre, the production opened on December 30, 1979. The final form of the production succeeded in adhering both to the pregnant

inspiration of the text ("a living growing mass . . . that destroys all forms") as well as to the specific demands for its performance. Halina Filipowicz has called the production "a major event in postwar Polish theatre,"[16] and has been described by Krystyna Demska, Braun's personal assistant, as "an original stage happening."[17] The performance was divided into three major stages or phases, and incorporated many of the methods that have become the trademark of Braun's theatre. Each stage took place in a different location in the theatre building; at various times the actors and spectators interacted informally; at specific times the spectators were divided into smaller groups and led to the next phase of the performance, during which they observed the action in very close quarters; and at certain moments the spectators were invited to ask questions or make comments about what they were going through.

Braun was especially concerned that the production remain faithful to Różewicz's dictum that Birth Rate have "no beginning, middle, or end." Braun strategically blurred the transition that the audience had to make between the world outside and the inside of the theatre, as well as their passage into and out of the created world of the performance. Actually, for most of the performance, the audience moved through a kind of theatrical limbo in which they remained acutely conscious of themselves as spectators

even as they were led through a series of uncomfortably close encounters with a barrage of theatrical stimuli.

The first phase of the performance took place in the main rehearsal room of the theatre. It was called "Conversations About Birth Rate" and was simply that.[18] When spectators purchased tickets they were informed that they were free to attend this special phase if they so chose. Otherwise, they were to gather outside the theatre in the street at the announced curtain time. Usually about thirty to forty people attended this initial phase. (In a sense the audience was given the choice of when they wished to begin the performance.) After this first small group was led to the rehearsal room, they were engaged in a discussion and information session led by Braun or, in his absence, his Assistant Director. He offered an introduction to Różewicz's technique of theatrical creation and then invited the audience to ask questions about the performance and the company's preparations for it. They were also invited to ask questions or make comments about the whole problematical nature of the birth rate and how they felt it affected them. This phase initiated the spectators in their progress through Birth Rate, or rather, impregnated them with it.

Following this session, the group was taken out to the street to join the rest of the audience, and from there the conjoined spectators were led into the properties warehouse adjacent to the theatre. The audience was guided into the

warehouse by three inspectors or guards who would remain with them during the entire evening. The presence of these guards, who were armed with pistols and dressed in trench-coats, commanded the spectators to move briskly and in an orderly fashion from one phase to the next. These guards became a unique and decidedly disconcerting element of the production. Braun had gotten the idea for the guards from a short dramatic sketch written by Różewicz entitled "Guardians of Order" (Straż porządkowa), and he received Różewicz's permission to incorporate it. Braun would continue to use this intimidating theatrical device in later productions, in particular The Plague in 1983, based on Camus's novel, in which the guards became rats dressed as smiling waiters.

These guards, who gave the audience explicit instructions concerning their proper conduct during each phase of the performance, helped to create a playfully intimidating atmosphere which further blurred the boundary between the real lives of the spectators and the theatrical world in which they were being immersed. Although the constant presence of the guards forced each spectator to become uncomfortably aware of him- or herself as a spectator watching a performance, no spectator was ever allowed to abdicate the responsibility of maintaining a constant vigilance during the entire performance. Perhaps because the shadow of a greater and grimmer authority fell across these men,

they became, in a sense, the enforcers of the critical import of the action as it unfolded, and continually reminded the audience that they were to be active agents within it. The audience was never bullied into participating in some psychodramatic scenario, and they were never made to play a role more intimidating than that of spectator. Braun strove to maintain a careful equilibrium between the insistent reality of the theatrical images and scenes presented, and the acknowledged openness of the performance to analysis, investigation, and the extraction of individual meaning by each spectator.

After the audience had been led into the properties warehouse they were divided into small groups of twenty and given explicit instructions about their conduct during the upcoming phase. This phase recreated, in lurid detail, the scene in the Scientist-Hermit's laboratory, and was staged in the cellar directly beneath the warehouse. As each small group of spectators descended into this subterranean cell, they were warned by a guard that they must touch nothing, nor were they allowed to speak directly to the scientist as he worked. They were told to stick very close together as they toured the laboratory. The scientific apparatus included Różewicz's conveyor belt, but it carried hundreds of small dolls, miniature plastic people, rather than the babies originally envisioned. The dolls also littered the desk at which the scientist worked. The main subject for

experimentation was a woman-vessel who lay in a glass-topped coffin with needles stuck in her arms to pin down pieces of fruit.

As the group toured the cramped laboratory, the guards provided information on the work that the scientist was doing--problems of genetics, demography, and increased population growth. Despite the rigidly enforced rules of the tour, the group was invited at certain moments to participate in the experiments by becoming subjects themselves. The scientist maintained a burlesque show to help gauge the effects of visual stimuli on the birth rate, and the spectators were allowed a few moments to watch it. They were also invited to try on the latest chastity belt. At the end of the tour each group was handed over to another guard who escorted them back upstairs to view an old man lying in a coffin made of an old refrigerator. He delivered a long rambling monologue on the dire consequences of the unchecked birth rate. This monologue was taken from Różewicz's play The Funny Old Man and was included at his own suggestion.[19]

Significantly, this phase of the performance was called "Audience Action,"[20] and in it Braun was as concerned with preparing his audience for the direct role they would play in this action as he was with creating the properly macabre environment to play out Różewicz's text. Presented in the guise of an actual tour through a "real" scientist's laboratory, the scene was designed to startle and playfully

disconcert the audience with its wild agglomeration of visual, aural, and theatrical stimuli which were alternately grotesque, silly, hilarious, ominous, and harrowing. While the spirit of close inspection kept the atmosphere of examination disturbingly real, it did not overwhelm the spectators as if by some bizarre hallucination. The scene of this subterranean world embodied a dense field of inquiry and offered possible responses to this power of the growing human mass that defies clinical examination, quantification, or control. The responses could range from the experimental to the theoretical to the bizarrely philosophical. The scene did not embody a concrete world so much as a provocative model of consciousness as it struggles to maintain its equilibrium in the face of such irresistible power. The only salvation is in imagining, and even the more bizarre and ludicrous images in the scene revealed the plenitude of the mind's responses. Indeed, they deepened the atmosphere of mystery, fascination, and foreboding that this power can breed in the mind, just as it bred the entirety of Birth Rate in Różewicz's consciousness.

Following the scene in the laboratory, each group was led back through the warehouse and into the foyer of the theatre. While groups waited for each succeeding group to join them, the guards invited people to examine some of the mass of documentation that had been collected about the birth rate. Slides of swarms of insects alternated with

slides showing masses of people (football stadiums, sex orgies). Graphs recorded current data about the soil, water, air, and temperature in Wrocław collected on each day of the performance. A chart of the anatomical cross-section of a human figure hung on the wall. The spectators were also invited to study documentation about the actual creative process that led to this production of Birth Rate. Notes by Braun, the designer Zarębski, and the composer Karnecki were posted on the walls of the foyer. Just as in the initial phase "Conversations," the audience was being invited to experience and share in the act of consciousness that produced Birth Rate in the theatre. Again, the audience played a dual role as witness to the unfolding action of Różewicz's vision and as participant in the act of theatre that was struggling to find an appropriate form to consummate that vision. The spectators became another force of mind working through the problem of the birth rate.

Braun had actually designed the reuniting of the groups in the foyer as a reduplication, through physical action, of the "very process of bursting" that is the central action of Różewicz's text. Incrementally, the audience experienced the increasing pressure of the "living, growing mass of mankind" within an enclosed space. Braun designed this physical action to work on his audience unconsciously, "through the skin," as he said, quoting Antonin Artaud. The theatre foyer gradually filled to capacity as spectators

were finally forced to stand nearly shoulder to shoulder. In fact, Braun had designed the entire physical action of the production as a series of gatherings and departures, symbolic deaths (down into the cellar) and resurrections, through which the audience could experience directly the process of life growing deep within the organism, the bowels of Współczesny Theatre.[21]

Once the audience was reunited in the foyer, they were ushered into the theatre proper for the next phase of the action. As they entered the auditorium, they were again given complete instructions about proper conduct in the theatre, and each member of the audience was frisked by one of the guards. Inside, the acting company was gathered on stage in costume, and the scenes from The Cherry Orchard, Lord Jim, and The Old Woman Broods slowly emerged from the group of actors, were played, and then receded back into it.

The Cherry Orchard scene occurs at the very end of the play when Madame Ranevskaya's daughter, Anya, cries out, "Goodbye, old life!" as the family leaves the estate forever. Trofimoff calls out in response, "Welcome, new life!" This excruciating "moment of silence" between "Goodbye" and "Welcome" captures, for Różewicz, all the aching uncertainty that dictates the living of a single human life. Różewicz locates virtually the whole of modern theatre--Beckett, Genet, Ionesco, Pinter, Albee, Mrożek, and Witkacy--precisely in that crack of time between "Goodbye"

and "Welcome" which has become the metaphysical black hole of modern consciousness.[22]

Lord Jim discovers that "moment of silence" in the human heart as well as in the world. The novel, which expounds on the great literary themes of courage, honor, love, and betrayal, exposes the heart of darkness in Jim in a fleeting moment of humiliation and despair. That moment is related by the book's narrator Marlowe, who observes across a crowded public room a man who stumbles over a stray dog. As the dog disappears into the crowd, Marlowe's companion remarks, "Look at that wretched cur." Suddenly Jim emerges from the crowd, seeing neither the dog nor the companion, and confronts Marlowe in a desperate, hushed voice: "Were you speaking to me, sir?" Różewicz finds this scene to be the most heartbreakingly honest moment in the novel.

These two scenes, portraying infinitesimal moments in great works of western literature and played out in the most conventional, traditional theatre space--the proscenium stage, served to expose the monumental cumbersomeness of that theatre and its incapacity to capture just those brief and fragile moments of life that pass away leaving only a bare trace of memory. The scene from The Old Woman was staged, however, as a gentle augur of what the audience might expect to experience at the end of this long progress--the real possibility of a final breakthrough and

"crumbling of the walls," a chance to renew "the living organism" which was, for Braun, the collective body assembled in the theatre at that moment. That living organism would become the community itself, reborn inside Współczesny Theatre.

As the action of the scene from The Old Woman unfolded, a young dancer began a slow, graceful pirouette on a low platform at the back of the stage, while over a loudspeaker a voice softly spoke the lines of a Różewicz poem titled "A Beautiful Young Woman." As the Old Woman scene played out, the young dancer slowly glided down-stage past the action and moved gracefully toward the audience. But as she approached the edge of the stage, a huge net, similar to camouflage netting interwoven with ragged strips of cloth, fell from the top of the proscenium and covered the entire stage opening. The dancer froze, and then Zbigniew Górski, who had been acting the part of the Waiter (again) in the Old Woman scene moments before, came downstage and stood close to the netting. He began to speak the lines of a Rozewicz poem titled "Faces" (Twarze), which reflects sadly that people die inside even in the midst of close friends and family because they cannot overcome the barriers that divide people from each other in their fear and loneliness. But the choice can be made, argues the poem, to break out of the circle of familiar faces in order to be born again. Górski spoke, as himself, directly to the audience.

With this climax of the first part of the performance of Birth Rate, Braun seemed almost to be "quoting" himself and his previous production of Old Woman. In that performance the young poet (played by Górski) had escaped from the magic circle of the theatre and been resurrected outside it in the midst of real life and real people. But now the same actor stood behind a thin membrane that divided the actors and the audience from each other. In Old Woman Braun had, in essence, broken through the barriers erected by art and renewed the bonds of community outside the theatre. He had acted on behalf of his community. But in Birth Rate the choice to cross the barriers of fear and suspicion could come only from the audience. At the end of the performance the lines from "Faces" would be repeated, but this time without the net to separate the participants. The choice would have to be made freely by each member of the audience to cross the circle of familiar faces and be born again. Following Górski's recitation of the poem, the audience filed out of the theatre for a brief intermission.

When the audience returned to the auditorium for the culminating stage of the performance, they found the proscenium curtain pulled closed. They were instructed by the guards to walk up onto the stage itself, but to do so they had to pass through one of three doors which had been built to accommodate people of different heights. Each spectator had to choose the door closest to his or her own height.

Arriving on stage behind the curtain, the audience was told to stand on tiered platforms that surrounded the skeletal structure of a real trolley compartment. It was constructed using the actual seats, windows, and baggage racks of a streetcar. The physical action closely followed the action as Różewicz had outlined it in his text, and as the company of actors had improvised it at the Wrocław train station. The audience became part of the living, growing, human mass as they crammed together on all sides of the streetcar and verged on the wildly escalating action and mounting hysteria.

The scene also incorporated, but in a significantly altered form, an element of the action as Różewicz had originally conceived it. Różewicz designed the scene to include a transcendently lyrical counterpoint to the breeding chaos of the primary action. He envisioned two young people who enter the empty compartment one after the other and then engage in idle conversation. Their chat quickly develops into a strong mutual attraction. They remain together as the compartment fills up and overflows. As the hysteria dissipates and dies, the young couple, blithely unaware of what has just happened, exit the compartment and go off together hand in hand. In the production, Braun translated this image of innocent young love into a fanciful vision of two lovers sitting on a trapeze suspended high over the compartment. As the action intensified, the couple

snuggled together, laughed, flirted, and idly observed the chaos below. Różewicz agreed that some such scene was essential to suggest that the potential for love and intimacy still existed as a constant in a world overrun by the life mass.

Braun elevated the young lovers because he wished to raise the entire scene above the level of crushing reality to a plane of wild Dionysian farce. Although it would be foolhardy to apply any generic term to Birth Rate, it must be mentioned that Różewicz himself declares in the text his firm resolve to write "a comedy."[23] And Birth Rate is certainly funny, but as a particularly savage intellectual farce of ideas. Its hilarity is touched with madness. Różewicz perceives the power of the life force neither as good nor evil, but as dangerous and also potentially liberating. The action of Birth Rate must be perceived as a pure generative principle, even a biological force, as Różewicz argued in an interview at the time of the production: "Efforts to get into the compartment at all costs are justified. They are efforts of the spermatozoa to reach the ovum. . . . Life is only on the inside, this is the only place where one can eat, breathe, and multiple."[24] The action inside the compartment is personal and creative, as well as social and destructive. If the enclosed space is a congested, industrial metropolis imprisoned by a ruthlessly repressive regime, the living mass may burst forth and wreak

destruction, incite riots, and spread violence. But the walls that are "crumbled" may also be those of rigid morality, class hostility, and cruel repression. Once burst free, the living organism may produce new, fresh life.

Braun designed the end of the performance to make this dual Dionysian force unsettlingly clear to his audience, and to offer them a clear choice of either retreating from, or confronting, its difficult implications. As the action inside the compartment reached a pitch of hysteria and began to erupt through the walls, the entire acting company suddenly froze and remained still for several seconds. They then slowly relaxed and turned their attention to the trapeze lovers, who were lowered to the stage floor. The young couple then walked slowly out through the auditorium quietly singing a song about the loneliness of cities. Once they disappeared, the actors turned their attention toward the audience and began to recite individual lines from the Różewicz poem, "Faces," that had ended the first half of the performance. This was done in a very simple, direct, and informal way to individual spectators or to small groups. Once again, the poem affirmed Różewicz's and Braun's faith that a moral choice can be made despite the loneliness and suspicion that builds up walls between people during times of great fear and uncertainty: "One dies in the circle of familiar faces. One must cross it, one must break it and leave it. But upon leaving it one no longer exists. One

must escape the familiar faces, names, pictures, to be born again."[25]

The performance ended in much the same way as it had begun, in quiet conversation. Just as at the start of the performance, the boundary between the world of the theatre and the world outside was blurred as the actors and spectators remained in each others' company. The spectators were once again invited to share their feelings about what they had just experienced with the actors, and together they passed out of the auditorium into the lobby of the theatre. This final encounter would last an indefinite length of time, becoming simply a social gathering, until at last the few remaining spectators would be escorted to the exit by the actors.

Birth Rate contained everything that Braun had dreamed and thought about, experimented with, and tried to realize in nearly twenty years of work in the professional theatre in Poland. The production represented the most complete expression, to that time, of what he hoped the theatre of the community could be, a genuine meeting of individuals gathered freely together to participate in a creative event that profoundly affected their daily lives. Ironically, while Birth Rate was the most important work Braun produced prior to the declaration of Martial Law, it is also the work least yielding to understanding and critical assessment. Braun himself has warned that the production is virtually

impossible to reconstruct.[26] It could only be directly experienced by each person who must create his or her own meaning through a complete immersion in the process that was Birth Rate. How, then, to assess it?

I do not think it an exaggeration to say that Birth Rate was a living thing, and I would suggest that one must approach it as such and not treat the production as an entity, or even an event, with certain formal boundaries or discernible structure, even if those boundaries were of the vaguest outline. Birth Rate did not so much live and grow, as mutate. By this I mean that it altered its basic composition and even its fundamental spirit as it adapted to changes in time and space. In my interview with Krzysztof Sielicki (who had written the description/analysis of the Osterwa Old Woman), the critic mentioned that he had seen the production at the time of its opening, and then several weeks later. He made the observation that only at his second attendance did he "really begin to see the actors;"[27] meaning, I think, that it took a certain period of time for the actors in Birth Rate to open up and offer the performance as a genuine collective participation and social gathering, and not simply as a highly unusual piece of environmental theatre. This is precisely what the production of Old Woman lacked in 1974, this fully realized sense of the urgent "here and now" of the performance as it

unfolded gradually through time and space, with the spectators joining in the progress step by step along with the actors.

Sielicki also feels that the time and place were exactly right for just such a performance on the eve of the 1980s. The production was especially popular with students and young intellectuals, and Wrocław was also a center of Solidarity activism. Birth Rate did not exhort a political, but a moral and spiritual, activism. The performance was a joint expression of faith by two men who believed that consciousness could be reconstituted as fundamentally a communal act. Różewicz and Braun attempted to use theatre as an incubator of collective consciousness to release the power of thought and wonder in each participant in Birth Rate; that is, the power in each person to be a poet and a fellow member of a free, human community.

Another strong indication that Birth Rate defied any attempt to translate the living experience of the performance into discursive analysis can be found in the nearly incomprehensible critical review published by the venerable Maria Bechczyc-Rudnicka in the journal Teatr. (The translator of the article, Jacob Conrad, assures me that the review is as convoluted and elliptical in the original Polish as it is in English.) The critic seems to wander, under the spell of the performance perhaps, through the labyrinth of her own impressions and thoughts, and the

review is as kaleidoscopic as the production. But she does not seem able to make any genuine progress as she wanders in circles from one thought to the next. It must be said that Rudnicka does praise the production very highly, both for its daring originality of form and for its power to speak boldly and eloquently for the "preservation of the face"; that is, the face of humanity which, following the death of God, may be the only place left to catch a glimpse of the divine spirit still alive in the world.[28]

Perhaps the strongest evidence that Birth Rate possessed a pregnant vitality beyond its initial theatrical life and specifically Polish spirit can be found in the reception that the production was given when it toured to the Dublin Theatre Festival in 1981. The production also revealed its ability to adapt to changing environments since Braun had to re-stage the piece substantially to accommodate the spaces in which it was performed in Dublin. The site of the performance was the Gate Theatre, and by the luckiest chance, an abandoned, burned-out ballroom was located in an adjacent building. After the initial "Conversations" phase conducted by Braun on the stage of the Gate with the proscenium curtains drawn closed, the audience was escorted down an emergency exit, through a small garden, and into the blackened cavern of the ballroom. The room was surrounded by small alcoves or cells and the audience was given a kind of side-show tour, with each alcove containing an individual

tableau from the "Scientist/Hermit" scene--the Scientist working at his doll-strewn desk, the woman-vessels, the old man in the refrigerator-coffin. Braun also introduced the young trapeze lovers in this phase, since they could not appear suspended over the streetcar in the final phase, as they had on the Współczesny stage. (In Dublin, this phase was staged in the middle of the auditorium.) The lovers, dressed in white leotards, performed difficult acrobatic exercises as an expression of physical freedom and spontaneous joy.

The audience was also invited to have a drink at the bar, which actually still existed in one of the alcoves. But the shelves contained only empty and broken bottles, and the glasses were covered with a thick layer of dust. The spectators were then led back to the theatre, where they watched the performance of the Chekhov and Conrad scenes from their seats in the auditorium. This phase of the performance also included several short, highly emotional scenes, either mimed or containing minimal dialogue, that were not part of the original production. These vignettes of modern urban culture--a fatuously contented bourgeois family, a thief, a gangster, an old woman selling herself for food--were offered as a kaleidoscopic montage of western mass-culture and urban decay. Together they created a relief image of the loneliness, isolation, and chronic

anxiety of modern civilization trapped in the squalor of great cities.

When the audience returned to the auditorium after the intermission, they were confronted with the streetcar sitting on a huge platform stretched across the seats. They were instructed either to sit on the stage or to stand in the aisles around the sides of the streetcar. The action of this final phase proceeded just as it had at Współczesny, but following the frozen climax the actors spoke the lines from "Faces" in English to the spectators. At several moments in the production the actors spoke in English, but the recitation of "Faces" moved the audience very deeply, according to the critic B. A. Young. Writing in the Financial Times, London, Young expresses unreserved enthusiasm for the collective response that this moment of the performance elicited: "They (the audience) clapped and cheered, slapped the actors on the back, and wrung their hands in a long demonstration of their appreciation."[29] Birth Rate had finally reached out to embrace a universal human community.

In my interview with Professor Czerwinski, the critic credited the success of Birth Rate, both in Poland and in other countries in eastern and western Europe, to Braun's astute reading and understanding of contemporary social crises and political issues. Birth control, the changing role of women in society, the dangers of mass population

growth and violence in congested cities, were all problems very much on the minds of people around the world in the late seventies and early eighties. Czerwinski maintains that it is one of Braun's greatest talents as a director to be able to tap into and arouse very strong emotional responses in his audience at precisely those moments when the collective mind seems most absorbed by the implications of certain ideas or social trends.[30] In Poland, Birth Rate had struck a nerve deep in the collective psyche of the people and anticipated a mood that was being fueled on a national scale by the rising tide of the Solidarity movement. Events were gathering momentum.

To measure the success and achievement of Birth Rate as a theatrical harbinger of the spirit of the new decade, two things, I think, must be considered. One is that, as the decade progressed, Poles came to realize that the real national drama was being played out not in the theatres, but in the streets, factories, and shipyards of the country. History had begun to fuel the imagination of the people and the theatre, with its constructed spectacles, seemed artificial and contrived in comparison. The second condition that prevailed to make Birth Rate such a unique creation and personal victory for Braun was the arid state of the national theatre in Poland in the early eighties. Although the situation was perhaps not as deplorable as Braun/Tymicki portrays it in his Drama Review article, the fact remains

that Polish theatre at this time had reached a very low ebb. Halina Filipowicz, writing in The Canadian Theatre Review, attributes the dismal state of the theatre to a number of sources, including "ruthless censorship, hard-line party directives, declining artistic standards, shrinking funds, personal animosities, and audience indifference."[31] This analysis by Filipowicz, while not as polarizing as Braun/Tymicki's, is certainly no more encouraging nor less condemnatory of the parties involved in the theatre's decline in the early eighties.

Whatever the conspiracy of causes and however the blame should be apportioned, the traditional theatre was becoming an artistic and social irrelevancy in the lives of the people of Poland in 1980. And Braun had managed to create a living force of community and galvanize the spirit of solidarity in his audience within a traditional state theatre and at a time of widespread audience apathy. But once the hopes and high expectations of the Solidarity movement were extinguished by the imposition of Martial Law, Braun would have to take his community, theatrically if not literally, underground in an attempt to protect and sustain its fragile life.

CHAPTER VII

SUSTAINING THE LIFE OF THE COMMUNITY THROUGH THE THEATRE

General Wojciech Jaruzelski, who in addition to being named Prime Minister early in 1981 had recently been named Chairman of the Communist Party, declared Martial Law on December 13, 1981. Although the declaration was perhaps inevitable and, according to some political observers, the only possible recourse for Jaruzelski to prevent an invasion of Soviet tanks, it nevertheless caught the entire country, and in particular Solidarity, by complete surprise. In the early morning hours of December 13, while most of Solidarity's leaders were attending a National Commission meeting in Gdańsk, government troops sealed off the major cities, cut the internal lines of communication, and interned as many as 40,000 Solidarity members. Lawrence Weschler calls Jaruzelski's coup "one of the most effectively executed maneuvers in recent history . . .,[1] and it plunged the country into a long, bitter winter of near-famine, repressive edicts, and spiritual demoralization. Among the twenty separate martial law decrees were suspension of basic civil rights such as speech and assembly, censorship of the press, and authorization of the armed forces to use coercion to preserve calm and order. The most feared arm of those forces were the ZOMOs, Jaruzelski's personal squad of

highly-trained thugs who walked the streets in loose packs and enforced the terms of Martial Law with swift efficiency.[2]

It would be inaccurate, however, to claim that the December coup had placed a strangle hold on the thriving spirit of a nation rejuvenated by the rise of Solidarity. In fact, after sixteen months of Solidarity activism and political confrontation, the country, according to Weschler, was slipping dangerously close to anarchy. Solidarity had still not come up with any clear program for managing the workers or the disastrous financial situation of the factories and mines. Shortages were becoming rampant and winter was setting in. The coup, according to some, was simply the most radical solution to an increasingly desperate situation. It did, however, succeed in snuffing out what faint life remained in the nation's collective spirit. Any possibility of unified resistance was extinguished. The only question that remained was whether the Polish people would survive, physically and spiritually, through the coming year.

In the months following the imposition of Martial Law, Braun and his company went into rehearsal for Forefathers' Eve. He chose the play, as he had chosen it four years earlier, because it expressed in the most eloquent language and boldest theatrical images the desperate plight of a proud nation under siege. A comparison of the two

productions testifies to the drastic shift in the political and spiritual climate in Poland from 1978 to 1982. In his earlier production Braun had used nearly the full text of the play and had staged parts of it outside the theatre in the hallowed nave of a Gothic church. The emphasis was on poetry, community, and ancient memory.

In 1982, Braun stripped the text down to foreground its political action, eliminated many subsidiary scenes and characters, and began the performance deep in the recesses of Współczesny Theatre. The 1978 production had attempted to expand the spiritual and theatrical life of the play and to tap into a reservoir of deep communal feeling. The 1982 production turned sharply in on itself. To capture the atmosphere of isolation and containment of Jaruzelski's prison state, Braun chose to begin the performance of Fore-fathers' Eve in the cavernous room directly beneath the Współczesny stage. Although he had not used this room for the performance of Birth Rate, he would use it again for a crucial internment scene in The Plague. This sub-stage room is enormous, about twenty-five feet high and thirty feet square. It is used to house the machinery and elevators for the trap doors in the stage floor. The elevators are, in effect, large cages set in thick iron frames. These frames reach from the floor of the sub-stage to its ceiling, and the cages can be raised or lowered hydraulically to carry actors to and from the stage. (It was one of these

elevators that carried Teresa Sawicka up to the stage for her entrance as Anna Livia.) The room itself embodies the cold, dank, concrete environment of internment and enforced isolation.

The center piece of the 1978 production had been Part II, with its emphasis on the mystical spirit of community expressed through the ancient rite of Forefathers' Eve. In the 1982 production the entire action centered on Part III, which had been written by Mickiewicz at white heat following his five-year exile in Russia from 1824 to 1829. Its immediate inspiration was the failed Insurrection of 1830. Based closely on historical events of 1823-1824 and on his own experience as a political prisoner in Wilno under the orders of Czar Alexander, Mickiewicz wrote Part III as a faithful depiction of a period in Poland's history when the entire country had been "locked up and administered as a vast prison."[3] Under the harsh rule of Alexander, Russia had begun to crack down on all expressions of nationalism and independence in Poland in the 1820s. In the 1978 production of Forefathers' Eve the audience had been enveloped by the spirit of worship in a sacred place: the church. In the 1982 production they became surrounded by the dank atmosphere of incarceration: the prison.

Mickiewicz also wrote six long lyrical and narrative poems to accompany Part III, which he called "Digressions."[4] These poems took the place of a second act or

epilogue, but they do not necessarily follow the action of Part III. In 1978, Braun placed these poems at the end of the performance as a kind of solemn recitation or coda to the preceding action. The poems were recited as if they were prayers. In 1982, Braun staged the poems as passionate and fiercely bitter monologues spoken by actors from inside the trap cages. The poems themselves are laced with mockery and savage irony and express Mickiewicz's disillusionment and feeling of profound betrayal at the hands of the Russian people, whom he had once loved and admired as fellow Slavs but who had imprisoned him and forced him into exile as part of a systematic program "aimed at the annihilation of Polish nationality."[5] The poems began the performance in 1982.

The six poems, along with a large section of Part III, were staged in the cavernous room beneath the Współczesny stage. This section of Part III is actually set in the cloister of the Basilian fathers in Wilno, which had been turned into a state prison to hold political internees. Many of the characters in these prison scenes are based on Mickiewicz's fellow students in Wilno, and several are actual historical figures, such as Jan Sobelewski and Felix Kolakowski, to whom Part III is dedicated along with the other students, prisoners, and exiles "who were persecuted because of love for their country." These scenes, which take place in a sacred place (a monastery) that has been turned into a prison, are saturated with an atmosphere of

secrecy and clandestine conspiracy as the students share stories of unspeakable persecution and heroic martyrdom. But these prison scenes are also imbued by Mickiewicz with a mystical spirit of "faith and miracles," and it is in his cell that Gustav is transformed into Konrad, the Polish national savior and the model for all subsequent literary and historical figures of heroic self-sacrifice in Poland.

At the beginning of the performance, the spectators were escorted into the sub-stage room in which straw had been strewn about, and when they arrived the actors were already in place in their cages. The cages were set at various heights, with some sitting on the floor and others suspended above the heads of the audience. The spectators nearly filled the room, and consequently the cages stood in their midst, as well as directly overhead. Although the room was meant to exude an atmosphere of incarceration, it was also intended to capture the spirit of (literally) underground activity and clandestine secrecy as the students sneaked out of their cells to share news of events outside the walls of the prison. Once the poems and the early scenes from Part III had been played, the audience was instructed to climb a long narrow stairway that extended up to and through one of the trap doors in the stage floor.

When the spectators emerged through the trap opening, they found themselves, of course, in the middle of the Współczesny stage, which had been designed to resemble an

enormous salon or ballroom. A number of scenes in Part III take place in the fashionable interiors of occupied palaces and estates in Warsaw and Wilno. These scenes contrast the arrogance and cultural snobbery of the "civilized" Russians with the suffering and humiliation of the Poles. As in the preceding prison scenes, the audience stood in the midst of the performance and moved from one area of the stage to another to witness the action at close range. The spectators literally rubbed shoulders with the czarist occupiers as they belittled the supposed cultural backwardness and degraded status of the Polish people.

Following the intermission, the second part of the performance (the remaining scenes of Part III) was staged with the audience sitting in the auditorium seats and the action taking place on the stage. The final scene of Part III, which ended the production, takes place in a small wayside chapel near Wilno on Forefathers' Eve. Outside, Polish prisoners can be seen being marched to Siberia. An endless line of men slouches along the horizon. In production these prisoners were played by the same actors who began the performance in the cages beneath the stage. Using the play of light and shadow and slow, choreographed movement, Braun had these prisoners ascend through the trap opening, march upstage and fall in a silent wave of mass execution. And then in a provocative echo of Anna Livia, he

had the prisoners return to life (or perhaps become their own ghosts as in November Night) and exit the stage.

While still in rehearsals for Forefathers' Eve, Braun began to discuss with his company the response that the theatre should make to the moral and political insult inflicted by Martial Law. A consensus was very quickly reached that the country was "living in the time of plague."[6] The image of plague suggested itself less as a metaphor for the insidious incursion of an external threat, than as a paralyzing reality, an implacable fact of everyday life, that had to be fought with firm resolve, but with no hope of ultimate victory. Plague is also overwhelmingly a collective catastrophe. It strikes a society as a whole, and must be fought by the entire community.

But the choice to fight can only be a personal choice, and it must come from the heart of each individual. For Braun, this was the simple message of Camus's novel The Plague, which eventually became the source for his production. One cannot be roused to fight by public outcry, no matter how impassioned or outraged. But if the choice must be personal, it nevertheless rises out of one's deepest sense of moral being; it is essentially a choice made in the name of society, of community. That is to say, one chooses to define oneself as a social being, first. To this extent plague acts as a force both of social dissolution (Will

society perish?), and as an equally powerful force of social cohesion (We will survive or perish only as a society.).

Despite its insidious predilection for breeding chaos and confusion, plague also, in a sense, clarifies and even purifies moral choice and responsibility by polarizing threat and resistance into very clear categories. Although that choice may be exceedingly difficult to make, there is little doubt which side one is on once that choice has been made. The first responsibility is simply to recognize the threat and call it what it is. As Dr. Rieux, the narrator of Camus's novel, says, "Perhaps we'd better make up our minds to call this disease by its name." After that it is only "a matter of recognizing what had to be recognized, . . . and doing what had to be done."[7] The entire novel is written in a dispassionate, almost clinically detached style. Even when the plague disappears, there is no celebration of "final victory" at the end of Rieux's account. The book is composed only as a careful record of "what had to be done." The account is not intended by Rieux (and by extension Camus) to provide inspiration or even faint hope, but to teach the lesson of all pestilence, which is "that there is more to admire in people than to despise."[8] It was this spirit of fundamental moral choice and simple resolve in the face of an implacable invasion that made The Plague the right book for the right time.

Camus's novel, which Braun settled on after first considering Daniel Defoe's Journal of the Plague Year, provided the ideal model of a society that must fight an intolerable situation with no possible hope of victory. In fact, the citizens of the town of Oran do not defeat the plague; it simply disappears one day as mysteriously as it appeared months before. Plague also effectively eliminates or renders absurd the grand gestures of heroism and exalted emotions. It empties life of its higher drama; everything becomes quite mundane and simple. Ironically, as a metaphor on which to construct a theatrical vision, plague is singularly untheatrical, at least in its modern manifestation. But this was crucial for Braun's purposes.

Camus takes great pains to convey "the ordinariness" of the town, and when plague strikes the hotel manager despairs that now "we're like everybody else." As opposed to the image of plague as the Black Death with its gothic associations of satanic visitations and heaps of burning corpses, modern plague is like a thoroughly unimaginative and efficient bureaucracy. Dr. Rieux describes it as "a shrewd, unflagging adversary, a skilled organizer, doing his work thoroughly and well."[9] The plague is treacherous precisely because it can so easily insinuate itself into the everyday life of the community. The great danger is internal. Plague can strike anyone at any time, and the actual infection is less destructive to the community than becoming used

to the state of plague as a fact of life. As Camus says, "the habit of plague is worse than the despair itself."[10]

So the choice must be made to fight the plague, and Braun made the choice to mount The Plague, not out of a sense of deep moral revulsion or outraged humanity, but simply "as a matter of decency."[11] Or as Camus writes, "There is nothing admirable about this attitude; it was merely logical." Braun's decision to stage The Plague can certainly be seen as a reckless and foolhardy gesture, but it must in the final analysis, I think, be seen as the only "logical" choice he could make under the building pressure of the "moment" in Poland. In a way, he had no choice but to choose to perform The Plague.

In May 1982, Braun submitted Camus's novel to the Ministry of Culture for permission to be included in the 1982-83 season. At the time, no performance text existed. In June, Braun flew to New York to be a guest lecturer at the Institute for Contemporary Eastern European Drama and Theatre, which was co-sponsored by the National Endowment for the Humanities and the Graduate School of the City University of New York. In a room overlooking Columbia University and the edge of Harlem, he prepared an acting script and an outline of the physical action for The Plague.

The overall physical action and use of space inside Współczesny Theatre reduplicated the action of Birth Rate. The audience was brought together for the initial stage of

the performance, and then separated into individual groups and lead through the next sequences of action. They were then reunited in the main theatre for the last stage of the performance. As in Birth Rate, Braun wanted to create in The Plague the sensation of a continuous progress or living process that the audience would experience almost viscerally as they moved through the theatre from location to location. He wanted to create a theatrical gestalt through the shifting physical proximity of the actors and spectators. That gestalt was intensified by exposing spectators to the changing dimensions and atmosphere of physical space as they progressed from one stage to the next during the performance.

In the performance of Birth Rate, that gestalt was the action of the living organism, the "living, growing mass" of humanity, and also the cyclical, symbolic action of death and resurrection. In The Plague Braun plotted the movement through the passages and rooms of the theatre to induce in the audience the sensation of division and isolation. In an interview with Professor Ron Engle, who was in residence at Współczesny in the fall of 1983, Braun describes his own personal and creative response to the implacable reality of the plague:

> "It works by breaking ties, destroying understanding, communication, and contact between people. The plague performs an act of separation, isolation, and exile. Everybody is alone in the presence of the plague. . . .The social group

> represented by the spectators is being broken and divided."

It was only in the final moments of the performance that the audience was allowed once again to share in the feeling of "unity and solidarity." But the progress of the entire evening lead up to that moment: "It is for such ideals as unity and solidarity that this performance declares itself."[12]

As he had with other non-dramatic material such as Anna Livia and Birth Rate, Braun stripped the action of The Plague down to an essential action and focused it around a compelling and theatrically versatile image. He chose the image of rats, as carriers of the plague, to convey his vision of the infection as a slow, insidious intrusion into the daily lives of the inhabitants of the town. In Camus's novel, the rats are merely an early symptom of the plague. They appear out of nowhere and begin to proliferate until they are seen everywhere--in cafes, businesses, theatres, apartment buildings, and government offices. In a chilling description of the advanced stages of the plague, Father Paneloux imagines the infection as having taken up a diabolically casual residence in the town: "We had seen it walking at our side, or waiting for our coming at the places where we worked."[13] Braun built the action of the performance on this image of casually methodical occupation. The

rats became both symptoms of plague and active agents in spreading it.

He had four actors play the rats, and he dressed them as waiters, complete with little tuxedo jackets, bow ties, and long white napkins draped over their arms. These rat/waiters played a dual role in the performance. They played an integral part in the action, and also stood outside the action and directly confronted the audience. The rats performed with complete freedom and abandon. They continually invaded the stage action and disrupted the lives of the townspeople as they attempted first to ignore the presence of the rat invaders, and then to organize resistance against them. For large sections of the action the actors remained either completely unaware of the disruptive presence of the rats, or, if they became aware of it, seemed to be only mildly disconcerted by the chaos the vermin were causing. However, as the crisis of the plague mounted the townspeople and the rats finally engaged in open confrontation until the rats tired of the game and simply disappeared.

The rats also served as weird Masters of Ceremonies for the performance, ushering the spectators into the theatre, leading them through each stage of the performance, and instructing them in the proper decorum for witnessing the events as they unfolded. But at no time did the rat/waiters speak. They remained mute throughout the performance and

communicated with the audience only through elaborate pantomime gestures that were alternately ingratiating and intimidating. As waiters, or perhaps more accurately maitre d's, the rats performed their "duties" with a mixture of cool efficiency and self-possessed panache. There was something both terrifying and ludicrous in Braun's image of rats dressed as little waiters who maliciously spread death and corruption through the city with unabashed delight. Their actions seemed motivated by no higher logic than a devotion to sheer sadistic fun.

For the beginning of the performance, the audience was ushered formally into the theatre in an "embarrassed procession" by Rat/Waiters, as Tomasz Raczek describes it in his re-creation of the event published in Theatre In Poland.[14] The audience was lead through the darkened auditorium and up onto the stage. As in the performance of Birth Rate they were instructed to take their places on risers that surrounded a small central playing area. As the audience took their places on the risers, the stage took on the atmosphere of a tiny amphitheater, even suggesting a surgical arena. Once the audience was in place the proscenium curtain closed, sealing the stage off from the auditorium and isolating the space even further. The first scene took place in the kitchen of the Caretaker, who in Camus's novel is the first person to see a dead rat on the landing of his apartment building, and also one of the first to die of the

plague. (Depending on the account, the Caretaker is also identified as the Porter or the Doorman in the production.)

Braun titled this scene "Part I: The Entrance of the Rats,"[15] and was set in the tiny kitchen space that contained only the most basic, functional set pieces, including a working stove, small table and chairs, and a small side-table for serving dishes. The Caretaker entered and sat down at the kitchen table, followed by his Wife, who began cooking the evening meal at the stove. (I have capitalized the titles of characters who do not have proper names to remain consistent with the Drama Review synopsis and other accounts.) Actual dishes simmered and boiled on the stove, and the aroma drifted through the enclosed space to carry the pungent atmosphere of this everyday domestic scene directly to the audience.

As the Wife, played by Teresa Sawicka, began serving dinner to the Caretaker, played by Zdzisław Kuźniar, he turned to speak directly to the audience about his discovery of a dead rat on the stairs of his building. He spoke in the third person, as if delivering a Brechtian narrative of the event. He related how Dr. Rieux was at first skeptical about the existence of the rat, since the building was free of rodents. It must have been brought in from "outside," as the doctor says. But the Caretaker stressed that he did in fact see a rat on the stairs, "under the radiator." During this speech, the Wife had come to the table and sat down

opposite the Caretaker with her embroidery. As he finished his speech, a Rat quietly entered the room and stood at the side-table with his white napkin draped over his arm. The Wife then jumped up to finish serving the meal, and a second Rat entered and took up his position near the Caretaker. Strange waltz music began to drift into the space, and the Caretaker began to notice the Rats, although he showed no reaction to their presence. One of the Rats suddenly snatched a bowl of salad from the Wife's hands and served it to the Caretaker. The music abruptly ceased, and the last two Rats entered. Together, the Rats launched into a grotesque charade of service as they bustled around the table faster and faster and placed more and more dishes in front of the Caretaker and his Wife. Neither reacted to the Rats' serving frenzy, but only watched quietly without visible expression.

The Rats suddenly stopped, and the Caretaker delivered his next narration. He described the shocking proliferation of dead rats in offices, restaurants, factories, and churches. But one day the rats seemed to disappear from the town, and the Caretaker went back to his daily routine. Shortly, however, he began to show the signs of infection: fever, severe pain in the joints and groin, and boils on his neck. As the Caretaker related these symptoms, still referring to himself in the third person, he began to manifest them in his own body. He suddenly jumped up from the table,

and a Rat, who had been sitting under it, crept up to take the Caretaker's place in his chair. The Wife then stood up and moved away from the table as the remaining Rats took their seats. The Caretaker then threw himself on the table and frantically pulled the dishes toward himself. He cursed the Rats, and at that moment a Nurse entered the room, dressed in a crisp white uniform and wearing a surgical mask. She took the embroidery from the Wife and sat down at the table. The Angel of Death had arrived. Now fully infected with plague, the Caretaker began to rave in a delirium of fever, no longer speaking in third person: "I saw them everywhere. Under the bed . . . They were creeping up the sheets that covered me. Biting my neck. Rats! They were climbing over my chest. They were very heavy, reaching my throat, my mouth, my eyes. Rats!" Writhing in convulsions, the Caretaker expired. Under the gaze of the Nurse/Angel of Death, he then raised himself from the table and slowly exited the stage.

Following the Caretaker's death, a second Nurse, dressed in an identical uniform and mask as the first, entered the space, and together they transformed the kitchen into an operating room. Removing a white tablecloth that lay on the side table, the Nurses covered the scattered plates and dishes on the main table. Gathering the dishes underneath the white cloth, they formed two large lumps or shapes at either end of the table, and then took up two

kidney shaped surgical dishes that had been lying on the side table during the first scene. Holding the surgical dishes, they took their places at opposite ends of what was now clearly an operating table with two bodies lying on it.

Dr. Rieux, played by Andrzej Mrożek, and Dr. Malbou, played by Edwin Petrykat, entered the room dressed in surgical gowns, masks, rubber gloves, and caps, and took their places alongside the Nurses. Facing each other, the doctors began the operation performing identical, simultaneous actions, mirroring each other across the table. The Nurses handed them surgical instruments in the same mirror action. Suddenly all four actors froze, and two more Nurses entered carrying black telephones. They simultaneously lifted the receivers and held them to the doctors' ears. The doctors broke their freeze and began to talk to each other, although the Nurses continued to hold the receivers. The doctors held a private conference to discuss the symptoms of the sick, and then Dr. Rieux forced the issue to light and named the disease: "It is the plague."[16]

Part I of the performance set the dramatic tone and theatrical style for the entire action of The Plague. Within an uncomfortably close, nearly hermetic space, Braun attempted to initiate his audience into a theatre event that would be both insistently real and provocatively theatrical or artificial. He had isolated the small, domestic routines of everyday life and literally stuck them under the noses of

his audience. He then used theatre to inject a sense of almost intolerable momentousness into those simple, familiar events. Daily life thus became pressurized under the emotional weight of a mounting social crisis. Mundane events and clinical analysis were juxtaposed with highly stylized, choreographed movement. A grimy realism intersected with almost confrontational theatrics. The action of The Plague embodied the collision between private, domestic life and extraordinary events, and Braun intended his mise-en-scène to chart the chemical reaction produced by that collision in graphic and explicit images. Flagrant theatricality became a register of the unbearable pressure of destiny embodied in the visitation of the plague.

At the end of Part I, the Rats returned to order the spectators to proceed to the next stage of the performance, which Braun had titled "Part II: In the Presence of the Plague." The audience was made to divide into three groups, and each group, lead by a Rat, proceeded through the next three events. Each group would witness all the events, but in a different order. Consequently, each event was repeated three times. As each group moved to its next "experience," as Tomasz Raczek termed the events, the Rat/Waiters used "imperious gestures" to usher the spectators through various corridors and passages of Współczesny Theatre.[17] As the group filed out of the theatre they were accosted in the hallway outside the auditorium by the journalist, Rambert,

played by Maciej Reszczyński, who called out that he was a "foreign journalist" and did not belong there: "He had the right to leave!" He spoke in the same third person voice as had the Caretaker.

The first group to leave the theatre was lead upstairs to a second floor rehearsal room that had been transformed into a hospital ward. As in the first scene, the spectators were herded into very close quarters and made to sit on three sides in uncomfortable proximity to the action. The set also contained only those few essential pieces of furniture needed to create the scene. Two white metal hospital beds stood side by side about six feet out from the back wall of the room and perpendicular to it. A small white table stood against that wall with two small chairs on either side of it. The small table and chairs were flanked by two large windows, the bottom half of which were covered by white curtains. The room was entirely white and starkly lit with bare light bulbs. On the window sills piles of bed linen were stacked and folded, ready for use. Dr. Rieux sat on a chair alongside the small table, and on either side of him the four Nurses from the first scene sat with their hands folded on their laps, one pair on either side of the doctor. They looked at each other, but with little expression. Once he had lead the spectators to their seats, the Rat/Waiter took a seat directly between the beds and stared at Dr. Rieux and the Nurses.

After a moment of silence the Rat suddenly stood up, tore the sheets off the beds, and tossed them in a heap back onto the mattresses. Each pair of Nurses calmly rose and walked to one of the beds. They removed the "infected" linen and pillow cases and then piled them together on the floor between the beds. They then took clean sheets and pillow cases from the window sills and remade the beds. The Nurses also removed the patient charts that hung at the foot of the beds and crumpled them up. Those were also deposited on the heap of linen. The Nurses then attached new charts to the clip boards. Each change of bed linen and patient chart signified the death of another plague victim. The Nurses performed their duties in silence and with great precision and smooth efficiency. They expressed no emotion.

Once the Nurses had returned to their chairs, Dr. Rieux stood up and approached the foot of one of the beds. He "watched" a patient for a brief moment and then, as the Caretaker had done in Part I, directly addressed the audience in the third person. He described in precise, clinical language the horrifying death throes of a young child whose body lurches in response to the unspeakable spasms of pain that wrack his body. The moment the speech ended the Rat once again jumped to his feet and tore the sheets from the bed. Covering his face with his hands, Dr. Rieux returned to his chair, and the Nurses repeated their duties.

The teacher, Tarrou, entered the ward and also addressed the audience directly. He spoke in the same dispassionate voice about the necessity for resisting the plague: "Thus the fight against the plague became everybody's business, even if not everybody was taking part directly." He voiced Camus's philosophy that resistance was not an act of noble heroism, but only logical, a matter of choice: yes or no. Many people, he said, had already made their choice: "Not to let people die. Not to accept the plague."[18] The Rat/Waiter then gestured brusquely to the group to follow him to the next "experience."

Escorted by their Rat, the group entered another small room that had been created on the second floor foyer by hanging a black velvet curtain across the middle of it. The spectators stood against this thick curtain and faced a row of closed windows on the opposite wall. Just as in the previous scene in the kitchen and in the hospital ward, this space contained a tiny room outfitted with only essential pieces of furniture. The spectators stood in near-darkness at the edge of the space. The room was defined by a low platform, and sitting on it were a small writing table with an old desk lamp; another small table with dishes and a telephone; and in the far right corner underneath the row of windows a small bed with a bedside lamp. Next to the bed sat a large radio with an alarm clock on top of it. In the

opposite corner of the room sat a television set. On the bed an older man, about fifty, slept under dirty blankets.

This stage in the progress of the plague encapsulated the story of the writer, Grand, in Camus's novel. Despite the advance of the pestilence Grand has squirreled himself away in his tiny room in order to create the perfect work of literary art. He has spent countless hours changing and rearranging the words of the opening sentence of his projected masterpiece. He agonizes over the precise conjunction to use and the placement of each comma. He dreams about the day when he can deliver his opus to his publishers, who will unanimously proclaim it a work of genius. Grand is of course representative of all artists and writers who preserve a furious devotion to the rarified and supposedly unassailable ideals of literature and culture as a guard against the infection of the plague. Believing that they are men apart, living under special dispensation (either from God, Culture, or Mankind) as creators, they ignore the violation of human values that goes on around them every day. As the plague spreads, these men convince themselves that Art is the last impregnable refuge of the spiritually pure.

In performance this scene reduplicated the previous two. The audience was lead into a small enclosed room and made to stand at the very edge of the playing space. The Rat/Waiter who had escorted the group into the room then

jumped up and invaded the room to disrupt the meticulous routine of the room's occupants. As the old man slept on his cot, the Rat entered his room, walked over to the radio, and set off the alarm clock. Oblivious to the presence of the Rat, Grand crawled out of bed, still wearing his grey pants, light shirt, and sheepskin vest. He sat down at his writing table, turned on the desk lamp, and began to write. After a few moments, he put down his pencil and read the sentence he had just completed. The Rat walked to the window and opened it. This was an actual window that opened to allow street noises to waft into the theatre. From outside an announcement blared over a loudspeaker, warning that the city was being quarantined. The writer jumped up from his table and walked to the window to listen to the warning. After a few moments he slammed the window shut and returned to his writing desk. He read the sentence he had been working on, tore it up, and went back to his bed.

The Rat again set off the alarm and Grand repeated his writing ritual, but this time he modified his sentence slightly. The Rat then turned on the radio and another announcement blared out that the current situation was deteriorating rapidly. Again Grand switched off the radio, crawled back into bed, and awoke to the alarm set off again by the Rat. This time the Rat turned on the television set. On the screen this same Rat appeared and read yet another announcement. The news flash reported the imposition of

curfews and the restriction of movement around the city without a special permit. The writer doggedly repeated his ritual. When he was awakened for the fourth time, the Rat picked up the telephone receiver and dangled it by the cord. Grand went to the telephone, picked it up, and listened to the fourth announcement, which squawked through the receiver. This last announcement warned that people who roamed outside their restricted areas would be detained and summarily punished. Grand then slammed the receiver down and returned one last time to the security of his bed. The Rat switched off the desk lamp and ushered the spectators out of the room.

The spectators were conducted by their Rat down into the cavernous room beneath the stage where the performance of Forefathers' Eve had begun the previous season. This stage of the progress through the world of the plague-ridden city recreated the scene in Camus's novel that takes place in an internment camp. The sub-stage room was nearly dark, and rows of wooden benches were placed against the cement walls. As the audience sat down, they could see the outline of a red metal staircase. On a landing half-way up the stairs, one of the Rats sat operating a spotlight. He slowly panned across the seated spectators, shining the intense white light in their eyes. The spotlight also revealed the cages or cells used in Forefathers' Eve and also a large wooden table in the center of the room.

After a few moments, the President of the camp and Father Gustav, played respectively by Bolesław Abart and Zbigniew Górski, descended the stairs. As they did, the Rat who had ushered the group into the room climbed up to the landing and took over the spotlight from his partner. The partner Rat then followed the President and Gustav (called Paneloux in the novel) down into the room to keep an eye on them. Braun changed the priest's name to Gustav both because it is the name of Konrad before his transformation in Forefathers' Eve, and because it was the name of a priest who was a Solidarity activist at the time of Martial Law. Father Gustav took the briefcase he was carrying, placed it on the table, and opened it. The Rat then began to check the contents, opening a Bible and rifling through its pages. A small note fell out and the Rat immediately confiscated it. It was a "stiff," a note to be smuggled into or out of a prison. The President quietly observed the entire episode, and then exited up the stairs. Father Gustav then began making preparations to say Mass, placing two candlesticks from his case on the table and draping a violet stole around his neck. Opening the Bible, he began to read to the assembled spectators the prophecy of Christ's second coming.

The Rat who had been keeping his eye on Father Gustav rejoined his partner on the landing. He took a microphone from his pocket and plugged it into an electrical outlet

that hung by a wire from the ceiling. As the priest began his sermon, the rat pointed the microphone toward him and recorded his words. The sermon was taken from Camus's novel in which Father Paneloux recalls the first visitation of the plague, ". . . having seen it often, seated at our tables or at the bedsides of those we loved."[19] Gustav's words thus recalled the previous scenes in the Caretaker's kitchen and in the hospital ward. He then began to recount the story of the Black Death of Marseilles, in which only four monks of the Mercy Monastery survived the plague. Of those four, three had fled the plague to avoid corruption. Miraculously, the only monk to remain in Marseilles and still survive was the one who made the choice not only to stay, but to fight the plague. Beseeching the spectators as fellow detainees, Father Gustav cried out: "My brothers, each of us must be the one who stays!"[20]

As the priest finished his sermon, one of the rats ran down the stairs and began to bang on an iron beam with a heavy metal rod. He drowned out the final words of Father Gustav in a deafening clang of iron on iron. Gustav then gathered up his belongings and, blowing out the candles, reached out in a friendly gesture to the Rat. The Rat shrugged off the priest's hand, and Gustav then climbed up the stairs and disappeared. The Rat who had been beating the iron beam suddenly stopped, and the room was enveloped in an eerie and awkward silence. He then escorted the group

once more out of the room and back up to the lobby of the theatre. This ended the first part of the performance.

In his analysis/description of the production of The Plague, Raczek argues that these initial stages or "experiences," as he calls them, were designed by Braun to demonstrate that the struggle to isolate oneself, or others, against the insidious invasion of the epidemic was a "futile task."[21] To withdraw into the self-imposed isolation of private domestic life or artistic creation, or to impose isolation on others through quarantine in hospital wards or internment camps actually played into the hands of the Rats. Isolation and separation induces an atmosphere of paranoia, fear, and aloneness which the Rats can easily penetrate and infect with the disease. The question that Braun was asking, according to Raczek, was not how to avoid or innoculate oneself against the plague but how to restore and sustain the bonds of community in the face of the plague, which achieves its ends precisely by driving people apart and forcing them into small pockets of resistance. The plague does not defile healthy people so much as it draws out what is already, potentially, in their nature. The plague is life. And it is the sense of isolation and being cut off from other people that increases one's susceptibility to the plague. As Raczek says, the import of Braun's production for the community of Wrocław, and also of all Poland, was

that "we should fight not for the destruction of the plague, . . . but for the salvation of man."[22]

Part III of the performance, which Braun titled "The Great Spectacle of the Plague," brought the epidemic out of the hermetic interiors of the besieged city and placed it directly at the center of the stage of the whole society. Following the intermission, the audience was instructed to return to the theatre and take their seats in the auditorium. They were about to watch a very traditional, even antique, theatre performance. The stage was closed off by long, red velvet proscenium curtains which were lit by two hanging oil lamps. Once the audience had taken their seats, three loud, sharp knocks were heard behind the curtains. Suddenly a man appeared from between the curtains, dressed in the traditional costume of a Molière comedic actor: long black jacket, black stockings, bright red waistcoat, white neck ruffle, and red wig. He introduced himself as the Director of the Molière Acting Troupe and announced to the audience that they were about to see a production of the great author's Learned Ladies. He then disappeared behind the red curtains, and the three sharp knocks were heard again.

The houselights faded and the curtains parted to reveal a typical neo-classical interior constructed of painted wings. These wings represented a fashionable salon of the period. The back wall contained large double doors, and the

side wings were painted to look like tall bookcases filled with books. A young girl, Henriette, was seated on an elegant divan stage right. She wore a blue crinoline dress of the period and a powered white wig. Like the Caretaker's Wife in the first scene, she embroidered. A prompter could just be seen at the side of the stage, holding a script in one hand. The double doors opened and an actress playing Armande entered carrying a book. She walked downstage and began the opening dialogue of the play with Henriette.

The scene proceeded for several moments in typical Molière high style, but suddenly one of the Rats strolled out onto the stage from the wings. As he entered, Armande began to falter and forget her lines. The prompter could be heard whispering frantically off-stage. As Armande began to struggle more visibly, Henriette rose from the divan and walked downstage. Both actresses tried to maintain the scene by playing more exaggeratedly to the audience. But Armande finally fell into convulsions and died at the center of the stage. The Director ran out onto the stage and gestured for the curtains to be closed. As they did, the Director could be seen running to the lifeless body of the young actress. Enormous confusion could be heard behind the curtains, and then the Director once more came forward to announce a change in the program. Due to an unfortunate illness afflicting the young actress, the part of Armande would now be played by one Mademoiselle Bernard. He then

disappeared behind the curtains, and the three knocks were heard yet again.

The curtains parted and the scene began exactly as it had moments before, except that this time a much older actress was playing Armande. As the scene progressed, a second Rat appeared on-stage. This time he walked downstage and stood with one foot perched on the seat of the divan. This was Henriette's Rat. She began to collapse in convulsions, just as Armande had done in the previous scene, and the Director again ran out onto the stage gesturing for the curtains to be pulled. But this time Armande II, who had wandered downstage found herself trapped in front of the curtains. In her embarrassment she began to recite both her own and Henriette's lines to the audience. As she struggled foolishly all alone on the stage, the curtains parted yet again and revealed a second Henriette, also much older than the original, sitting on the divan embroidering.

The scene began again and followed the same grisly course. A new Rat entered and immediately Armande II went into convulsions. The Director rushed on-stage. The curtains closed. But this time Henriette II was pushed out in front of the curtains. As she began to recite the lines she broke down in tears. The curtains parted to reveal the Prompter trying frantically to get into Armande II's costume. But she had inadvertently put it on backwards, and the wig sat crazily askew her head. Henriette II burst into

hysterical laughter as the Director, who had been helping with this quick-change, dashed off-stage. The Prompter also burst out laughing, and the Director quickly returned to try and restore order.

At that moment the Rats re-emerged in a pack to the sound of moaning music. One of the Rats grabbed the Director and dragged him downstage, wrenched the staff from his hands, and struck it hard three times on the stage. The same Rat snatched the Director's red wig and placed it on his own head. Two of his accomplices did the same with the actresses' wigs. The fourth Rat put on the Prompter's glasses and snatched the script from her hands. The Director was then shoved violently upstage along with Henriette II. The Prompter rushed to join them, and together they huddled and watched the Rat version of the Molière scene. It was performed entirely in pantomime, and acted out with grotesquely exaggerated gestures. They re-enacted Armande's convulsions and laughed silently at the ridiculous "spectacle of the plague."

The Rats then proceeded to destroy not only the scene, but the scenery as well. They overturned the divan and then scurried behind the painted flats of the set. After a moment both side wings came crashing to the stage floor. The Rats broke the back flat in two and toppled it to the floor, revealing a bright red back curtain. One of the Rats walked up to it and with one hand tore the material to the

ground. The Director, Henriette, and the Prompter dodged the falling scenery, and huddled together in terror. Once the Rats had demolished the set they forced all the actors from the previous scenes, with the exception of the actors playing Dr. Rieux and the teacher Tarrou, to assemble a huge barbed-wire fence which was erected to span the full width of the stage. It sealed the actors off from the audience, creating an internment camp of the entire stage. The voice of Dr. Malbou suddenly broke over a loudspeaker, announcing that the city was now in the full grip of the plague: "No longer were there individual destinies, only a collective destiny--that was plague." Malbou warned that this was the most desolate period of the plague because it had become a way of life. Revolt had given way to a "vast despondency," a great spiritual paralysis.[23]

During this grim report the Rats gathered upstage in a pack. A waltz began to play, and two of the Rats exited the stage and returned with a small table and four chairs. They placed it stage center and all four Rats sat down. The remaining actors stood around the periphery of the stage and quietly watched them. The Director stood apart from the other actors and also stared out at the audience. For a few brief moments everyone on-stage remained frozen in silence, with the Rats staring defiantly at the actors. Then first the writer Grand, followed moments later by the journalist

Rambert and Dr. Malbou, approached the Rats and took up a position upstage of them. But no confrontation occurred.

After a brief pause one of the Rats slowly rose from his chair and walked downstage to the side of the Director. The Rat lifted his arm with the napkin directly in front of the Director's eyes and then dropped the napkin at his feet. The Director did not move, causing the other three Rats to rise slowly from the table. A collective gasp from the actors caused the Director to turn quickly upstage. Seeing he was outnumbered, the Director very slowly stooped down, picked up the white napkin from the floor, and carefully draped it over his arm. Henriette II turned away from this humiliating sight and buried her face in her hands. The Rat then returned triumphantly to the table, and all four Rats sat down in boorish majesty.

The three remaining Rats now raised and dropped their own napkins, and Grand, Rambert, and Dr. Malbou collected them with a politely servile bow, repeating the gesture of submission made by the Director. The Director also bowed, and the four new Waiters exited the stage and returned immediately with plates of food to serve their new masters, who lounged comfortably in their chairs. As in the first scene in the kitchen, these new Waiters raced in faster and faster circles as they performed the duties of service to the new order. The accelerating movement became a frenzied

dance to the accompaniment of sprightly waltz music, and all the actors joined in.

Suddenly one of the Rats swept the dishes from the table and one of the Nurses jumped up on it. She began a wild, provocative dance, and a Rat joined her, pulling up a second Nurse with him. The Nurses became more and more explicit in their dance as they exposed their breasts and thighs to the crowd. The crowd became more frenzied as they all danced around the table. Suddenly the music stopped, and the entire crowd froze in place as the stage lights dimmed. Dr. Rieux and Tarrou walked on-stage and stood directly behind the barbed-wire fence. During their ensuing conversation they glanced briefly at the audience. They discussed what was for them the real danger of the plague, its real threat, which was that each person "has the plague within him," and may infect someone at any time and in any place.[24] The plague is simply the manifestation of the existence of evil, and no regime or political power has exclusive possession of it. The only resistence lies in daily vigilance and in the power of moral choice within each individual.

At the end of this brief talk the music once again blasted from the loudspeaker and the crowd again took up its barbaric celebration. But the crowd had now taken on a violent temper, and they began to attack the Rats, throwing them out of their chairs. The Nurses were dragged down from

the table, leaving one Rat to stare down defiantly on the crowd. The crowd backed down and instead attacked the food remaining on the table. The writer Grand exited and returned with more plates, which he gave to the Rat standing on the table. The Rat lifted the plates high over his head as the crowd reached frantically for more food. He began to toss the plates around the stage and the crowd scurried after them. Once the plates were returned to the table the Rat threw them clear into the wings of the theatre. The crowd again chased after them. Alone on the stage, the Rats all sat down at the table and began to play a game of cards in slow motion. Tarrou and Dr. Rieux continued their talk about fighting the plague.

Tarrou voiced his personal belief that the only solution was to seek a way of life that would ensure that one did not fall susceptible to the plague, that is, to evil. One's only choice, considering the consequences, was to learn "how to become a saint." Rieux asked Tarrou whether sainthood could be possible if one did not believe in God, and he confessed that "what interests me is becoming a person."[25] This short exchange very closely followed Camus's novel. Tarrou suggested that, under the conditions of plague, the two pursuits most probably amount to the same thing. Together, they wondered whether the plague had, for a moment, forgotten them.

During this private exchange the Rats continued to play cards in slow motion, and after a few moments a fight broke out among them. They knocked each other to the floor and attacked one another with their chairs. After a brief but wild scuffle the Rats rose to their feet and looked at each other. They removed their uniform jackets and threw them in a heap on the floor. They then turned and walked slowly into the wings of the theatre. Tarrou and Dr. Rieux turned around and ran to the middle of the stage. They looked around in astonishment and then slowly exited. As Rieux exited a young woman passed him, wearing a worker's coat and a scarf on her head. She carried a large metal bowl filled with white baby diapers. She crossed down to the front of the stage, sat the bowl on the floor, and began to hang the diapers on the barbed-wire. As in the previous scenes, the woman began to speak in the third-person directly to the audience. She reported the end of the plague, speaking simply and without emotion. She reported that the plague had gone as mysteriously as it had come, and although the city remained fearful and suspicious, the "faintest stirring of hope became possible."[26] This hope meant that finally the dominion of the plague was over. The woman continued to hang diapers on the barbed-wire during her report, until, as she finished, an enormous section of this barrier was covered with white cloths. This simple, pure image not only ironically echoed the greasy napkins of the Rat/Waiters, but

reverberated through Braun's work of the entire decade, including the sheets of the Washerwomen in Anna Livia, and the bloodied bed sheets in White Marriage.

It is difficult to imagine how Braun managed to get the scenario for the performance past the censors, let alone onto the stage. It almost didn't make it. Following initial permission, Braun and his company rehearsed The Plague during spring 1983, and the production was due to open in early May. But following a final dress rehearsal on April 27, 1983, the censors withdrew their permission. (It is not unusual for a production to be halted at this late date if it is deemed unsuitable. The censors attend this final dress rehearsal to make just such a determination.) After several more rehearsals and several long discussions with the censors in which Braun agreed to delete certain passages of the text, permission was granted for two special "closed" performances on May 6 and 7, 1983. Permission was then given for six more performances in May. Word quickly spread through Wrocław, and during these performances thousands of people milled around outside the theater, since only 450 spectators were allowed inside.

Because of the Martial Law censorship no reviews appeared either in the local or the national papers. The lone exception was the review by Thomas Raczek which appeared in the Warsaw weekly, Polityka, on August 6, 1983. It is this article that appears in translation in Theatre in Poland,

and which has been quoted in the preceding paragraphs. (See note no. 14.) Raczek called the production of The Plague "the unquestionable theatrical success of the past season. Both the adaptation itself and the whole of the performance are marked by clarity, concision, and purity of construction." Raczek proclaimed the production "Braun's highest accomplishment."[27] The production was finally readmitted to the repertory of Współczesny, chiefly because of the outrage voiced by critics, scholars, and artists in Poland and in America. Both Ron Engle and E. J. Czerwinski, who saw the production during its run in Poland, consider The Plague to be one of the most important events in Polish theatre in the last decade. Permission was also granted for the production to appear at the West Berlin Theatre Festival in September 1983 and at the Holland Festival in Amsterdam in June 1984. Permission was rescinded, however, for the production to travel to the Belgrade BITEF Festival and to play a two-week run in London in 1984.

The most tragic consequence of the struggle with the authorities to present The Plague was the near-fatal illness that sent Braun into the hospital for several weeks. Shortly after the six additional performances were presented at Współczesny, Braun collapsed under the tension of weeks of endless battling with the authorities. Stress sent his blood pressure soaring and pushed him to the brink of a massive coronary. After being rushed to a hospital in

Warsaw he spent a month recuperating in a sanitarium outside Wrocław. When he returned to the theater at the end of June, the production was still prohibited. In August he began rehearsals for the West Berlin Festival, and finally, at the end of October, The Plaque re-entered the repertory and played over one hundred performances. It remained in repertory through the end of June 1984, but it has not been staged since in Poland.

As E. J. Czerwinski points out in his article on Polish theatre in the "post-Solidarity" period, The Plaque grew directly out of the performance of Birth Rate. In effect, Birth Rate "paved the way" for the later production.[28] But there was a marked difference between the two productions, both in the construction of the stage action and in the charged theatrical atmosphere that enveloped the audience in the event. For his production of Birth Rate, Braun had worked closely with his designer Krzysztof Zarębski. But for The Plaque he acted as his own designer, or rather "stager" of the performance. In the program for the production he is listed as being responsible for inscenizacja, which can be translated roughly as mise-en-scène. But he is also listed as responsible for tekst and kompozycja przestrzeni, which can be translated as "text" or "book," and "spatial composition" or even "spatial conceptualization," suggesting that Braun considered both the physical staging

of the production and its articulation as an overall action of theatre to be component parts of a single vision.

With his production of The Plague, Braun had finally managed to expunge last vestiges of the theatre of illusion where the mise-en-scène acts as a dense medium through which one glimpses a shimmering or shadowy reality. He achieved an event in which the hard, gritty nuggets of an immediate, present reality were juxtaposed with a provocatively theatrical performance style, personified by the Rat/Waiters. The Plague was for Braun the fullest realization of what he called his principle of a "realistico-poetic" theatre. Krzysztof Sielicki maintains that the chief difference between Birth Rate and this production lay in the clarity of "the target" toward which Braun had directed his theatrical vision in The Plague.[29] In addition to the perhaps obvious political identity of this "target," I would suggest that Braun was also aiming his message to a more immediate target, and one that was not so easy to hit and penetrate: the human heart. The Plague struck home in the heart and conscience of each spectator seated in his theatre at the moment of performance.

Birth Rate had invited the spectators to share directly in the creation of the performance and had embraced them as genuine participants in the event. Through a delightful inundation of facts, images, and ideas, the audience was addressed, essentially, as a collective "living organism."

In the final moments of the performance, the actors and spectators interacted freely as a community, a living political and social body. But The Plague, I believe, addressed each spectator individually, and asked him or her to become a witness to events and to make a moral choice as a free individual on behalf of an enslaved community.

It was a choice, however, that could not seek consummation or be carried out in the theatre. It is a telling irony that in the final stage of the performance of The Plague the audience was reunited but forced to sit passively in their seats in the auditorium. During the curtain call, the actors remained on-stage behind the barbed-wire fence, which became an echo of Różewicz's "iron curtain" that crashes to the stage to interrupt The Old Women Broods and cut off the actors from the spectators. At the end of Birth Rate the spectators were offered an opportunity to break that final barrier and join with the actors in a community of free people inside the theatre. In The Plague that offer had to be withdrawn.

The final image of The Plague was that of a violent "interruption" that signaled the silencing of the voice of community both in the theatre and outside in the streets. But that final stage of silence and stasis, with the actors and spectators staring at each other motionless through the barbed-wire, was intended by Braun to be a challenge to his audience, and not an acknowledgement of defeat and

impotence. During the months, and soon-to-be years, following the imposition of Martial Law, people could no longer enjoy the luxury of celebrating the joys of community inside the theatre, when outside the plague waited to escort one home in the evening or sat across the kitchen table each morning. If community was to be preserved in the early eighties, it would take very hard, and very real, moral choices, not heroic gestures.

And in a very real way Braun was putting his vision of theatre as an incubator of consciousness to the ultimate test. To borrow Witold Filler's comments concerning the accomplishment of the production of Old Women in Lublin ten years before, Braun was attempting to suggest that "real reality offers possibilities that fictional reality lacks." Although the voice of community and the gestures of solidarity were being denied in the theatre, the performance of The Plague offered the possibility that the words and gestures of kindness and courage might succeed as creative--even theatrical--acts if one acted, to quote Timothy Garten Ash, "as if" freedom existed, "as if" Poles still had true dignity in the face of tyranny, and "as if" community were still possible.[30] It was no longer possible, or necessary, for life or the world to have value or meaning; it was only necessary to have faith in the idea that values and truth exist and then to act them out in the theatre of the world. Because, to quote Cyprian Norwid (appropriately), that is

what Poles have been fighting for over two hundred years, "a few ideas . . . which is nothing new."[31]

CHAPTER VIII

EPILOGUE AND FINAL ASSESSMENT

In his article for Modern Drama on the state of Polish theatre in the post-Solidarity period, E. J. Czerwinski writes that "[if] the authorities give Braun artistic autonomy, he may very well prove to be the person that the theatre world has been waiting for since the departures of Grotowski, Szajna, and Kantor."[1] They did not, of course, and he has not been, unfortunately, at least for the present and the near future. Czerwinski made that highly qualified prediction in 1984, when things were at their worst for Polish theatre and for the Polish people. The "vacuum" in Polish theatre which Emil Orżechowski described had expanded to become a spiritual wasteland in the 1980s which the Poles are only now beginning to recultivate with their hopes and dreams.

I had initially intended this final, brief chapter to serve not only as an epilogue but as an epitaph for Braun's theatre work in his native country. This chapter was meant to close the book on his life as a theatre artist in Poland. But even as these final pages were being prepared, they became obsolete, a thing of the past. The reigning principle of history and artistic life in Poland is radical change, and only five years after Braun's dismissal from his post at Współczesny Theatre the wheel of history has begun to turn again and a new era is beginning. In late spring 1989, Braun returned to Poland to attend the world premiere of his latest play, Immigrant Queen, which is based on the life of the great Polish actress, Helena Modrzejewska, known to her American audience as Modjeska. The production was staged at the Stary Theatre in Kraków by Jan Maciejowski and starred Anna Polony, one of Poland's most beloved and respected actresses. Such an event would have been unthinkable five years before.

Braun did manage to ride out the storm over The Plague in 1983, and he began to prepare his final production of 1983-84 season. It was, appropriately, a play by Tadeusz Różewicz called The Trap, based on the life of Franz Kafka.[2] It would be the last professional production that Braun would stage in Poland, and it would provide a poignant and ironic coda to his work of the previous fifteen years. The play ignores Kafka's life as a brilliant writer and

concentrates on the private emotional hell that he lived through as a frightened and lonely man oppressed by the emotional tyranny of his father and his own terror of sexual love. The "trap" of the play is Franz's own fragile body, and Różewicz was drawn to this writer through his search for, as Daniel Gerould says, "truth in nakedness." Through Franz's torment Różewicz displays the essential being of the artist stripped bare of every pretense, consoling myth, or comforting ideal. The play also presents stark and brutal images of the coming holocaust and the horror of Nazi oppression.

Ironically, Różewicz also includes in his text a character called Animula, who is meant to be Franz's soul or naked being. Animula may be either a young boy or a little girl dressed in white, and s/he never speaks. S/he remains on-stage throughout the performance and seems, at times, to be vaguely aware of what is transpiring on the stage. S/he leaves the stage only when the last audience member leaves the theatre.

Różewicz juxtaposes Fran's terrified, and terrorized, self with the outer world of gross appetite and vulgar existence that succeeds, ultimately, to the institutionalization of the barbarism by the Nazis. In his production, Braun rendered this reality in graphic and explicit detail. Nazi torturers and thugs were present on-stage from the start of the performance and even helped to change scenery.

Their numbers gradually increased as the performance progressed.

The set was designed as the facade of a massive, brick apartment dwelling, with a large entrance gate in the middle of the stage. At the end of the performance this gate stood in for the gate to the concentration camp, or even to the gas chamber itself. As the Nazi presence became more prevalent, Braun left no doubt that these were real people about to exterminate their helpless victims. Soldiers in full Nazi regalia ordered prisoners to strip naked and then put on the familiar striped prison uniforms. The production merged authentic scenes of grimy domestic life with more grotesque scenes that captured the twisted psychic states of people living on the verge of annihilation.

But the final image Braun wished to leave his audience with was that of the delicate young figure of Animula (played by a young boy), who appeared in a white nightshirt on the balcony of the apartment building. Moments before, Franz and his father had occupied the same balcony in a final pieta embrace as the prisoners entered the gas chamber. Braun loaded this figure of a frail angelic boy down with even heavier symbolic weight by having him then stand with his arms outstretched in a unmistakable echo of Pope John II, who stood on balconies throughout the country in 1983 and stretched his arms out to throngs of people in the streets. It was a lot, and perhaps too much, for the tiny

figure to bear, loaded down as he was with the accumulated weight of political, spiritual, and personal meaning for Braun. It was a powerful, but finally inert, image of transcendence.

The production opened on January 7, 1984 to strong reviews,[3] and since The Plague continued to play in repertory through the winter and spring, it appeared that Braun might have weathered the storm. It was not to be. Abruptly and without explanation, the authorities terminated his appointment as Artistic Director of Współczesny Theatre on July 5, 1984. He had been asked by the government several times in the preceding months to join the newly re-formed branch of the Artists' Union of Współczesny, a cultural (not a labor) union of all theatre artists which had been disbanded along with all other unions during Martial Law. He consistently refused to do this or to influence the union in any way on behalf of the authorities. But when the official notice of dismissal came, it contained no formal charge. Totalitarian regimes are nothing if not capricious. Braun was summoned to the local district office and handed his notice in perfunctory bureaucratic fashion. Its wording was firm, flat, and to the point. It was over.

Without his position at Współczesny, Braun was stripped of all the rights and privileges bestowed on the citizens of a socialist state, including health care and pension. He did not choose immediately to leave Poland. He continued to

teach through the next year at Wroclaw University and at the Drama School in Kraków on a part-time basis. The faculty at Wrocław University wanted to grant Braun a full-time appointment, but this could only be granted officially by the Ministry of Education. The request was denied. He might have continued in these positions on a part-time basis, but he realized that his artistic life was ended in Poland, most probably for good. He determined to start a new life in America as a professional director in spring 1985. He had already made several excursions to America as a visiting director and scholar. He had directed the American premiere of White Marriage at the Slavic Cultural Center in Port Jefferson, New York in 1975. E. J. Czerwinski was the founder and Artistic Director of the theatre. He directed The Card Index at the University of Connecticut in 1980, and at Notre Dame in spring 1982. He participated in the NEH Institute on Polish and Soviet theatre that summer in New York.

But his decision to emigrate to the United States entailed great risks, especially for someone seeking work as a professional director. He was fifty years old, and although he was esteemed as a director in both eastern and western Europe, he was virtually unknown in the States. As with many professional theatre artists in America, Braun received his first opportunities in academic theatre. He was appointed Visiting Professor at New York University for

the fall semester, 1985. He was also granted the sabbatical replacement position at Swarthmore College for the 1985-86 academic year and commuted between New York and Swarthmore, Pennsylvania during that fall. It was while he was in residence at Swarthmore that I met Kazimierz and received permission to write about his work. He was appointed head of the M.F.A. acting program at the State University of New York at Buffalo the following year. He assumed the position in January 1987 following a residency at the University of California at Santa Cruz in fall, 1986. Braun was granted tenure at Buffalo in 1989 and anticipates remaining in that position for some time.

Since his arrival in America Braun has continued to do adventurous work as a director in both professional and university theatre. He directed Ionesco's Rhinoceros at the Guthrie Theatre in Minneapolis in the fall, 1986. The production received very strong reviews, in particular for Braun's choice of enormous, life-like rhinoceroses to invade the stage and overwhelm the action with their unsettlingly "real" presence. Actors moved the ponderous creatures from inside the shell of their bodies. He also directed Różewicz's The Hunger Artist Departs at SUNY Buffalo, and invited the author to attend the opening, which he did. Braun turned America's obsession with mass media against itself by including his audience in the performance of The Hunger Artist. He used television cameras to turn his

spectators into performers themselves, and he obliterated the safe distance people need to feel secure in their private view of the public world. He used the performer/spectator relationship to examine all ideological and prejudicial judgments and forced his audience to judge their own social "role" in the arena of public scrutiny. Everyone was on stage, part of the "media event." The hunger artist became a projection of everyone's need to displace his or her anxiety of difference and aloneness onto a scapegoat, even if the scapegoat is turned into a celebrity.[4]

But I would like to focus briefly on two productions that Braun directed after his arrival in America, one at Swarthmore College in 1986 and one for the Odyssey Theatre Company in Los Angeles in early winter 1988, because they eloquently (and ironically) express, I think, the lonely predicament of a Polish artist in exile who is forbidden to live and work in his native country. Although space does not allow a detailed description of these two performances, they require mention because they both employed the same grim symbol of totalitarian repression with which Braun ended his production of The Plague--the barbed-wire fence that was erected on the stage to cut off the actors from their audience and silence the collective voice of the theatre. The presence of that fence reveals both how closely Braun remains tied to Poland, not only artistically but politically and spiritually, and also how far he has

traveled, geographically and historically, since that dark time of danger and defiance.

The first production to employ the fence was of an original script by Braun titled The Comet's Sign,[5] and was structured very much like The Plague. Braun attempted to give his new American audience a taste of life under totalitarian rule, and he used several locations in the main theatre building at Swarthmore College to take them through that progress. Braun staged the work in spring, 1986, using Swarthmore students and faculty. The performance began as nearly 150 spectators crammed together in a small room that represented an apartment in Warsaw during Martial Law. They soon learned that they were present to hear the reading of a banned play, The Comet's Sign, which was quickly broken up by the government undercover agents who had been planted among the audience. An argument then ensued among several actors, some of whom were planted in the room as audience members, about whether they should obey the dictates of the artistic reality of the performance--Warsaw, 1982--or ignore the commands of the "spies" in the room and continue the reading, or simply leave. Nothing was in fact actually holding anyone there except the performance, which was not really "real" although it had happened and was therefore true.

To settle the argument the audience was given the choice either to remain in the fictional reality of Martial

Law or to "return" to Swarthmore College, 1986, and watch a "show" about contemporary America as seen through the eyes of Kazimierz Braun. In actuality, both groups saw these next two segments of the performance but in reverse order. Those who chose initially to remain in Warsaw, 1982, were lead down into the boiler room of the building and submitted to a very realistic presentation of an interrogation room. People were singled out by a military officer and made to answer several questions about their identities. They were then instructed to hand over all the contents of their pockets, which were placed in large manilla envelopes and tossed into a box in the corner of the room. One was never certain whether those who were interrogated were "plants" or whether spectators had been chosen at random or had volunteered. Needless to say, this made everyone in the dank cement room exceedingly uncomfortable, especially when faced with the prospect of losing one's valuables. (Apparently they were returned at the end of the performance.) One's willingness to submit to the "rules" of theatrical reality became a subtle correlate for people's reluctance to violate the rules of political reality and their willingness to submit to mass intimidation. I have never experienced anything quite like it in the theatre, nor in my life for that matter. I learned much later that none of the people interrogated had been an actor or a plant. Everyone who came forward had done so willingly, or had volunteered.

The group that preferred to be entertained by a show were presented with a hilarious cabaret performance called "Kaz in Wonderland." It recounted in surreal cartoon style Braun's experience of interviewing for professional directoring work with two giants of the American theatre--Peter Sellars, who was portrayed as a wildly punked-out enfant terrible called "the Rabbit," and Ellen Stewert, who was portrayed as an imperious doyenne called "The Duchess." The absurd cartoon images that suggested a game show or beauty pageant softened, but did not obliterate, the humiliation Braun suffered in the face of such condescension and smiling dismissal.

Following an intermission, the spectators were reunited in the main theatre to watch the performance of the banned play, The Comet's Sign. This was also interrupted by the authorities during a scene interpolated from Hamlet, which they considered incendiary, particularly for the lines "to take arms" and "oppressor's wrong." The actors were then ordered by the authorities to erect an internment camp on the stage. The performance space is a long thrust stage, with seating on three sides, and consequently the camp became a four-sided cage of barbed-wire.

Once the fence was erected, the actor who had been playing Hamlet removed priest's vestments from a briefcase he had been carrying. He put them on and began to say Mass for the prisoners. After the service he was taken downstage

and beaten to death by the authorities. A woman then walked slowly toward the body and, once two doctors had stripped it naked and washed it, took it in her arms and cradled it in her lap as in a pieta embrace. The woman had, in an earlier scene, expressed her joy at being pregnant in a simple, lyrical poem. This was her son. As in many of Braun's performances, The Comet's Sign attempted to intersect sacred and political images and realities. The comet's sign echoed the star of Bethlehem, and the actor/priest became a contemporary manifestation of Christ. Following the brief pieta tableau, all the actors removed their costumes, dismantled the barbed-wire fence, and invited the audience onto the stage to share a secular communion of bread and wine.

Braun's production of Witkiewicz's The Shoemakers in Los Angeles in 1988 also ended with the erection of a barbed-wire fence that stretched across the small proscenium stage of the Odyssey Theatre. (The Odyssey is a professional, Equity-waiver theatre.) The play portrays consecutive world revolutions that culminate in a final communist order. As the performance neared its end, two government agents (KGB or CIA?) entered the theatre from the lobby and ordered the performance to cease. The actors were ordered off the stage and then instructed to erect the fence. Once they finished the job, they were ordered to sit in the aisles of the tiny auditorium among the spectators. While

the barbed-wire barrier was being erected, the two government agents dismantled the platform set, removing the bolts from the wooden supports so that it collapsed completely in upon itself.

What this use of such highly theatrical and politically charged image reveals, I think, about Braun's painful predicament as an exile artist is almost a heartbreaking nostalgia, not so much for a certain kind of theatre, but rather for a world where such images and gestures become materialized as inspired actions and where the stage world reverberates with the truth of reality. It has been said that for Polish artists and writers to be removed from the center of the national life of their country is to render them artistically impotent and politically irrelevant. The image of a barrier that separates a theatre and its audience can be nothing more than a demonstration to American audiences of a distant, if undeniable, reality. It must remain a theatrical curiosity in a country where theatre is just another form of idle entertainment and is about as threatening to the political system as a television game show or beauty pageant. Perhaps the final insult added to the injury of Braun's predicament in American theatre was the curtain call in the Los Angeles production, which took place in front of the barbed-wire fence with the cast waving and smiling at the audience. Only in America.

But in the final analysis, what Braun really needs to fulfill his, for now interrupted, progress as a theatre artist is not only to return to his own country but to his own theatre as well. E. J. Czerwinski has said that in Poland people spoke of Współczesny Theatre as "Braun's theatre," just as they spoke of Grotowski's or Kantor's theatre.[6] One could be paid no greater tribute in a country where theatre lives at the heart of the culture. Czerwinski also maintains that unless Braun can return to Poland and receive another post as an Artistic Director he will fail to fulfill the destiny he spent twenty-five years forging in Poland. Braun drew much of his inspiration as a theatre artist not just from works of great literature or from particular historical or political crises, but from his precarious position as an artistic leader who had to guide his theatre and his audience skillfully through the turbulent waters of contemporary Polish culture. Krzysztof Sielicki maintains that it is Braun's particular gift to be able to talk both "to poets and to politicians,"[7] and it could be said that it was finally this delicate balance of poetry and politics that stamped his work indelibly with the sign of his times.

Ironically, it is a play about another lonely emigré artist that has taken Braun back to Poland after a five-year exile. Immigrant Queen is very much a heartfelt confession of loneliness, longing and doubt.[8] Braun sees in Helena

Modrzejewska a true kindred spirit, and through her voice and thoughts he reveals his feelings of estrangement in a country that treats theater as commerce and where he will always be an outsider, forever a foreigner. Braun conceived the play as a private inner monologue of Modjeska (although it can also be performed with three other characters who invade her thoughts), and it speaks with the voice of one who has lived completely alone. Despite the success, acclaim, and financial security, Modjeska remained through the remainder of her life an artist without roots.

Whether this play will provide the initial impetus for Braun to return to Poland for good can only be speculated upon. Certainly recent political developments, in particular the free elections of June 4, 1989, which dealt a stunning blow to communist rule in Poland, make almost anything seem possible. But America has a great deal to offer Braun, and he America. He seems at present to be very much at home here. He has proven himself to be a highly accomplished and sensitive director of American professional actors, and he is a gifted and generous teacher. He has published criticism in American theatre journals. There is much opportunity these days for a truly "international" director, and much prestige. It is perhaps possible to have the best of both, or many, inviting worlds. Poland will always be there, as

an idea and a spiritual homeland. Consequently, this present study must remain for now unfinished, or rather, as Różewicz should say, "interrupted." The wheel turns.

POSTSCRIPT: AUTUMN, 1990

Just as the final draft of this study was nearing completion, Kazimierz Braun returned to Poland once more, this time to discuss the possibility of his returning there permanently to assume the Artistic Directorship and General Management position of a major state theatre in Wrocław, Teatr Polski (the Polish Theatre). The wheel of history, it seems, has turned full circle. Kazimierz politely refused the offer, in part because even with the historic changes the country still remains politically and economically unstable. But the invitation did open the door to directing opportunities in Wrocław and elsewhere in Poland. He will most likely return to Wrocław to direct a production in the late winter of 1991.

History moves in cycles in Poland. And it is with an unsettling but fulfilling sense of destiny that I close this five-year study just as Kazimierz Braun ends his five-year sojourn as a political and artistic exile to return to his homeland to reclaim his lost rights as a theatre artist. This story ends here with these few final words, but Kazimierz Braun's story goes on. The barbed-wire has come down, perhaps for the last time.

APPENDIX I:

Kazimierz Braun's Official Notice of Dismissal from Współczesny Theatre: July 5, 1985.

(translated by the director)

NOTE: Although the notice indicates that it was "delivered" (wpłynęło) to Braun, it was, in fact, handed to him in person at the district office by Janusz Owczarek. When Braun accepted the notice, he wrote across it "Received (Otrzymałem), July 5, 1984, at 2:08 p.m." This is a small but significant historical detail. The entire transaction took barely more than a minute.

District Executive of Wrocław Wrocław, July 5, 1984

Document Number: KS 1140/34/84

Citizen
Kazimierz Braun
General Manager and Artistic Director
of the State Contemporary Theatre
in Wrocław

According to Article 70, of the Law of June 26, 1974 (Bulletin of the Laws, number 24, paragraph 142, with the later changes), I remove you, Citizen, this day 5th of July, 1984, from the office of General Manager and Artistic Director of the State Contemporary Theatre in Wrocław.

At the same time I terminate your contract on October 31, 1984, with the advanced notice, effective on August 1, 1984.

District Executive of Wrocław

Janusz Owczarek

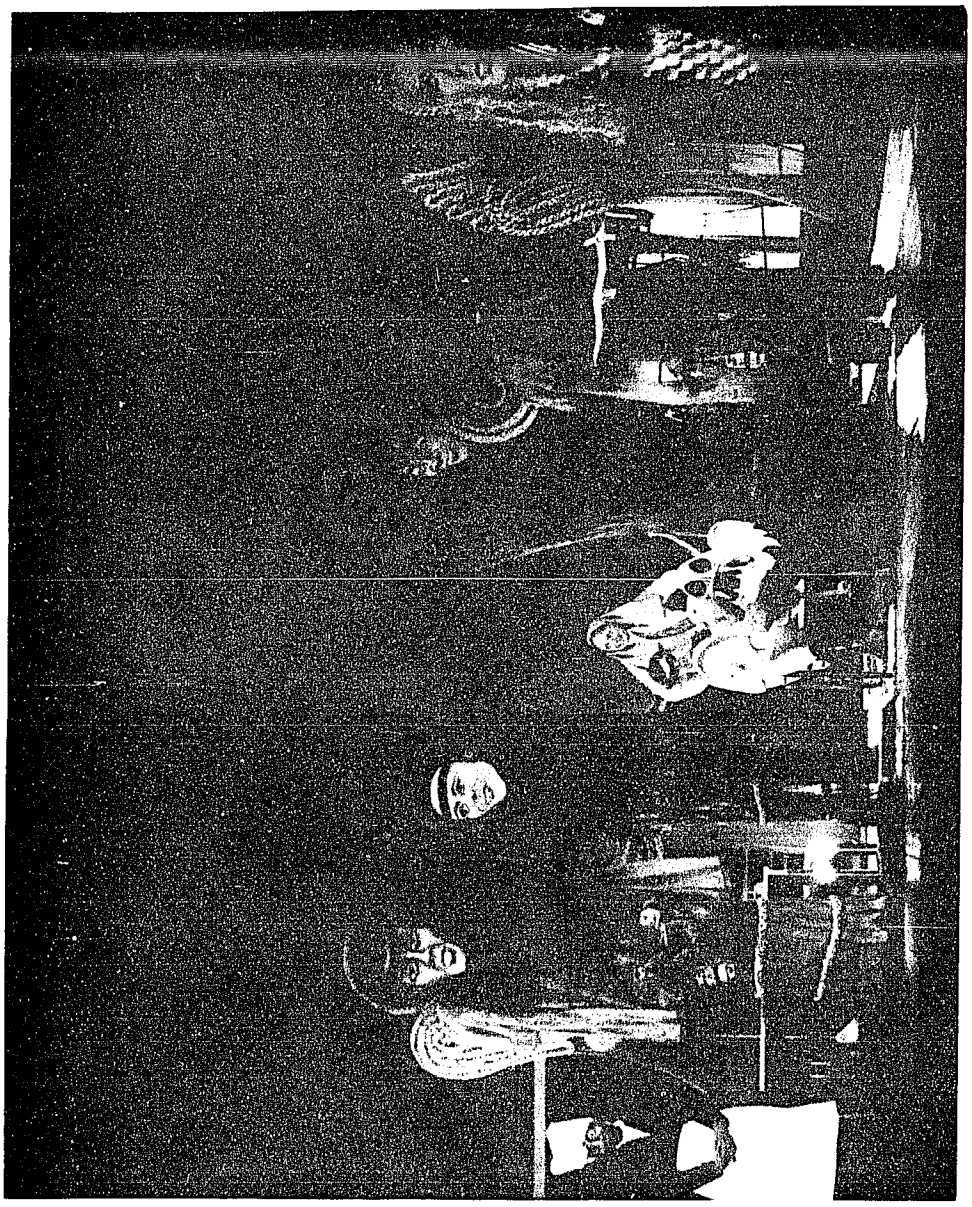
Delivered
July 5, 1984
Number of the book of the received documents: 10088/84

APPENDIX II:

Production Photographs of Works Staged by Kazimerz Braun, 1970-1983

1. The Interrupted Act, by Tadeusz Różewicz.
   Julius Osterwa Theatre, Lublin, 1970.

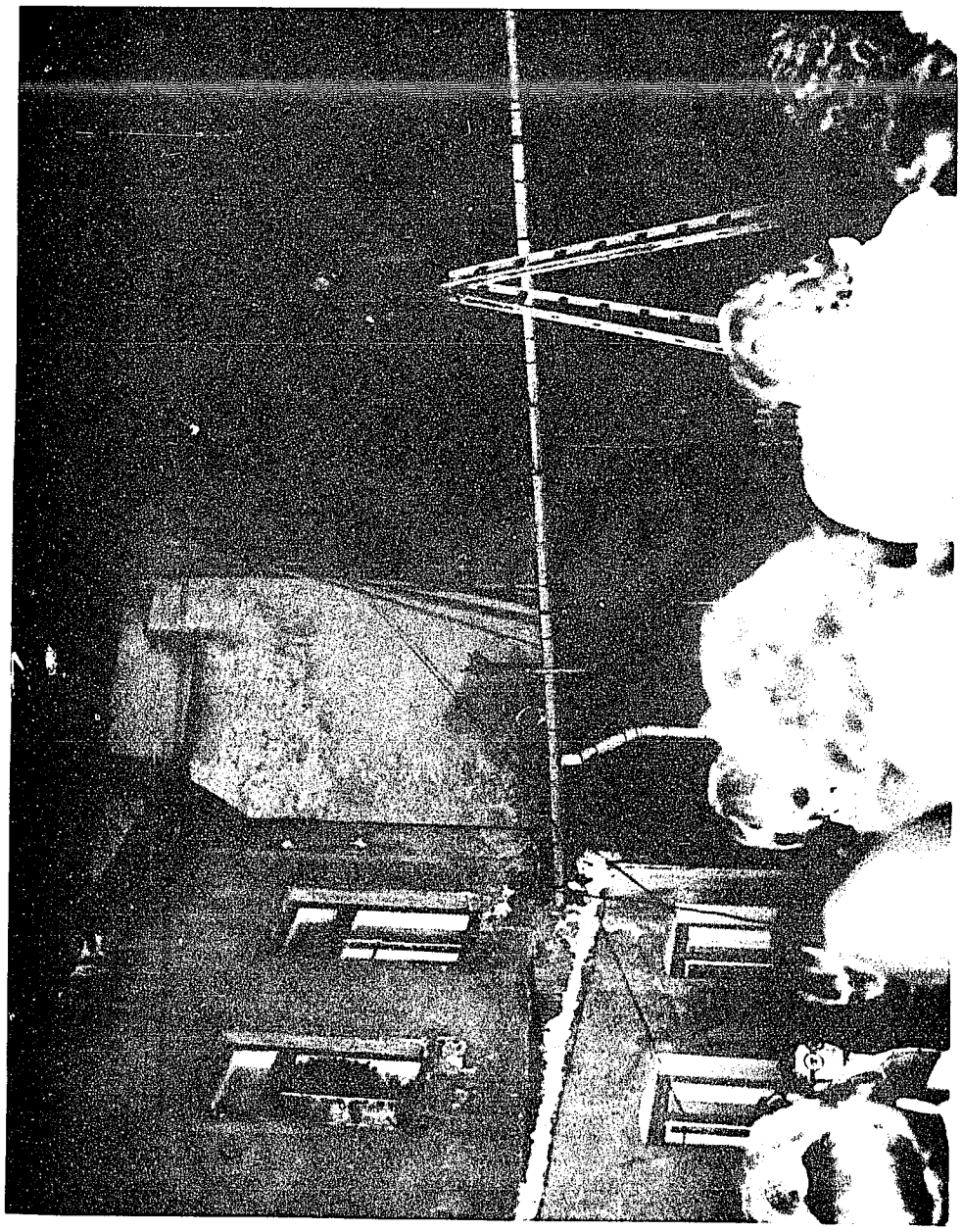
The "monumental" staging of the Engineer and Nurse scene.



2. The Old Woman Broods, by Tadeusz Różewicz.

Osterwa Theatre, 1973.

The "rebirth" of the Poet (Zbigniew Górski)
outside the theatre.

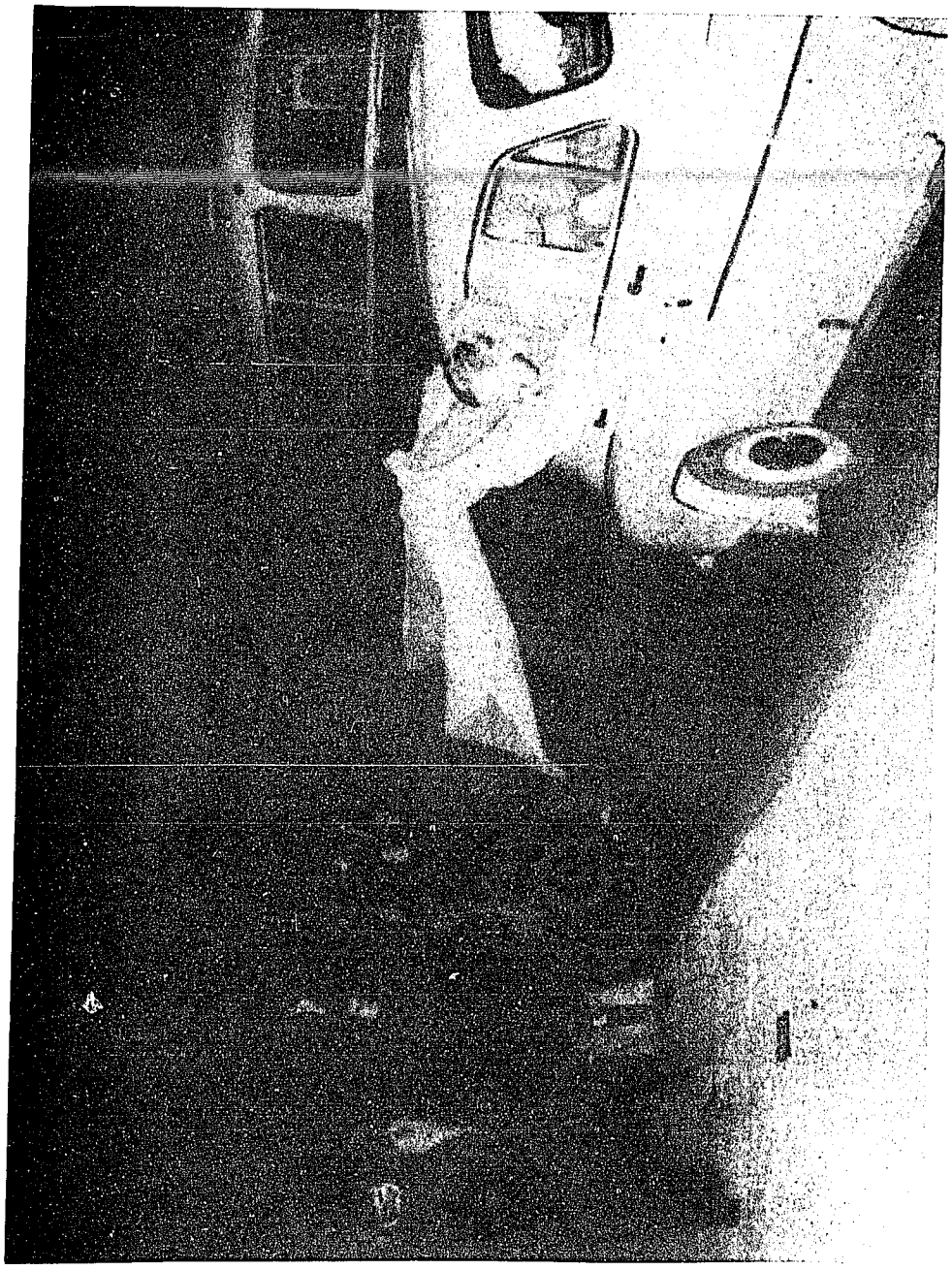


3. The Old Woman Broods. Osterwa Theatre, 1973.

The Poet gives a piece of candy to his real-life counterpart.

4. The Old Woman Broods. Osterwa Theatre, 1973.

"The Honeymoon"



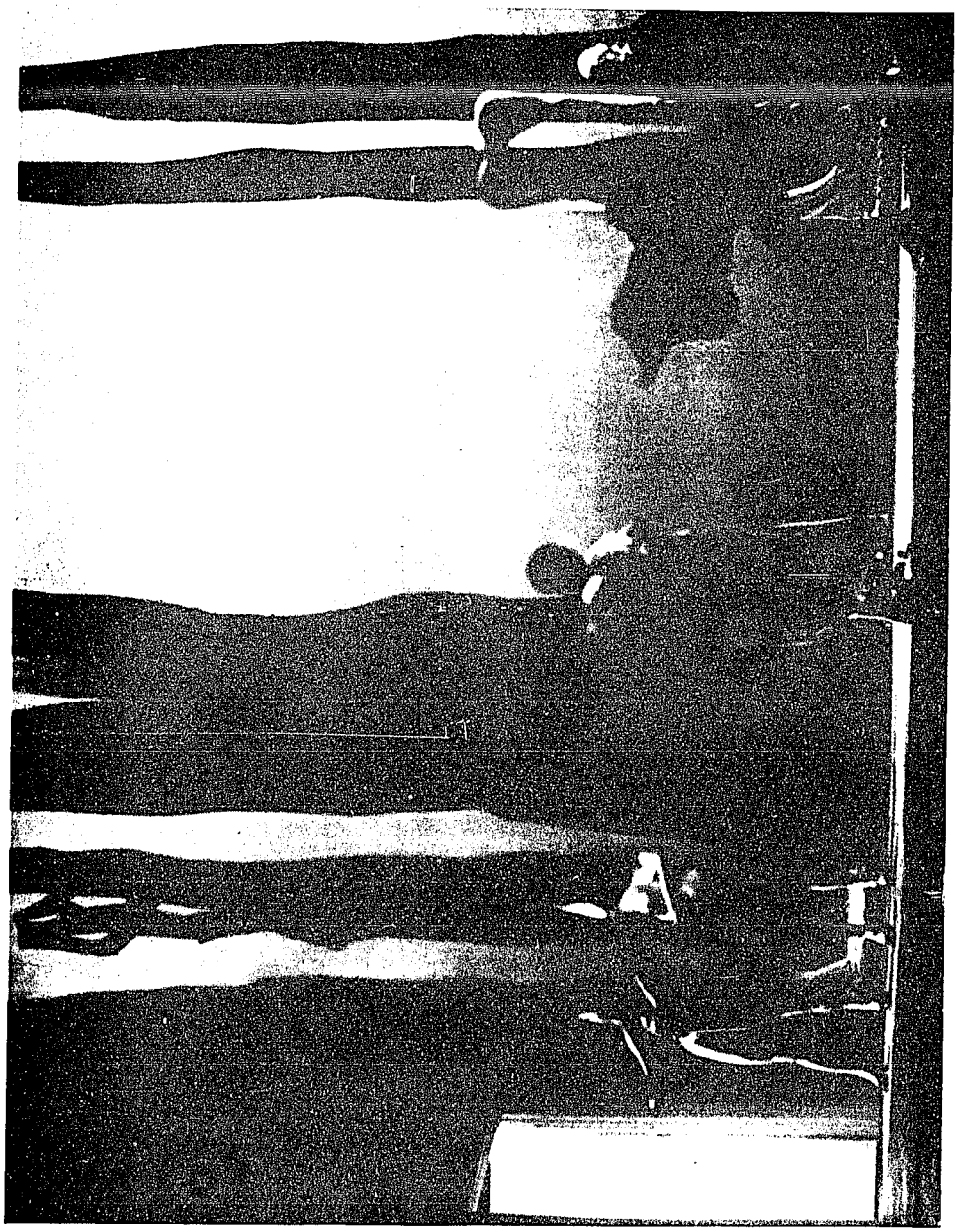
5. White Marriage, by Tadeusz Różewicz.

Współczesny Theatre, Wrocław, 1976.

Bianca (Grazyna Krukówna-Frymar) and Pauline (Halina Rasiakówna) are guided by the Good Angel.

6. White Marriage. Współczesny Theatre, 1976.

Bianca fights her Bull-Father (Boleslaw Abart).

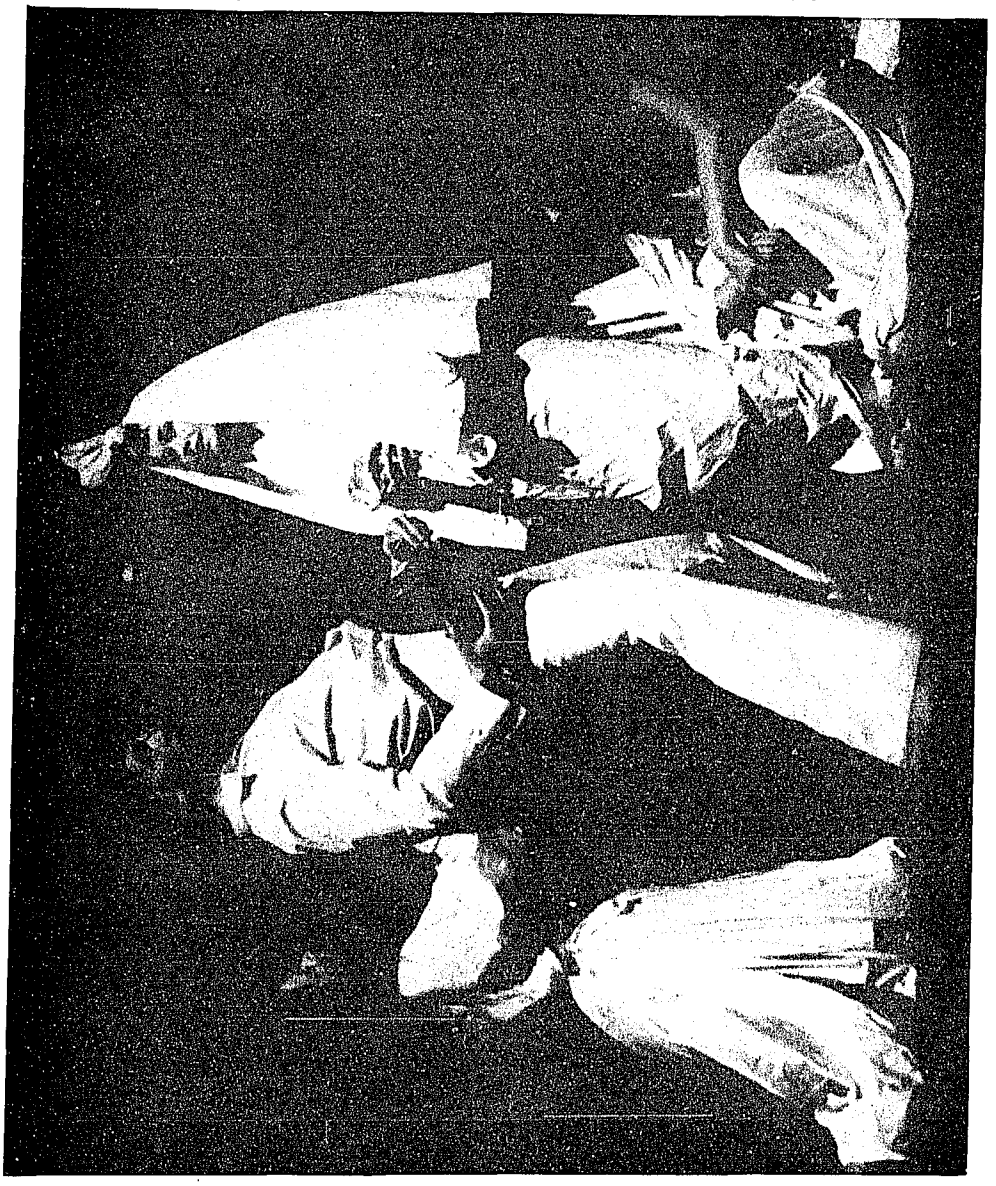


7. Anna Livia, by Maciej Słomczyński.

Based on the literary work of James Joyce.

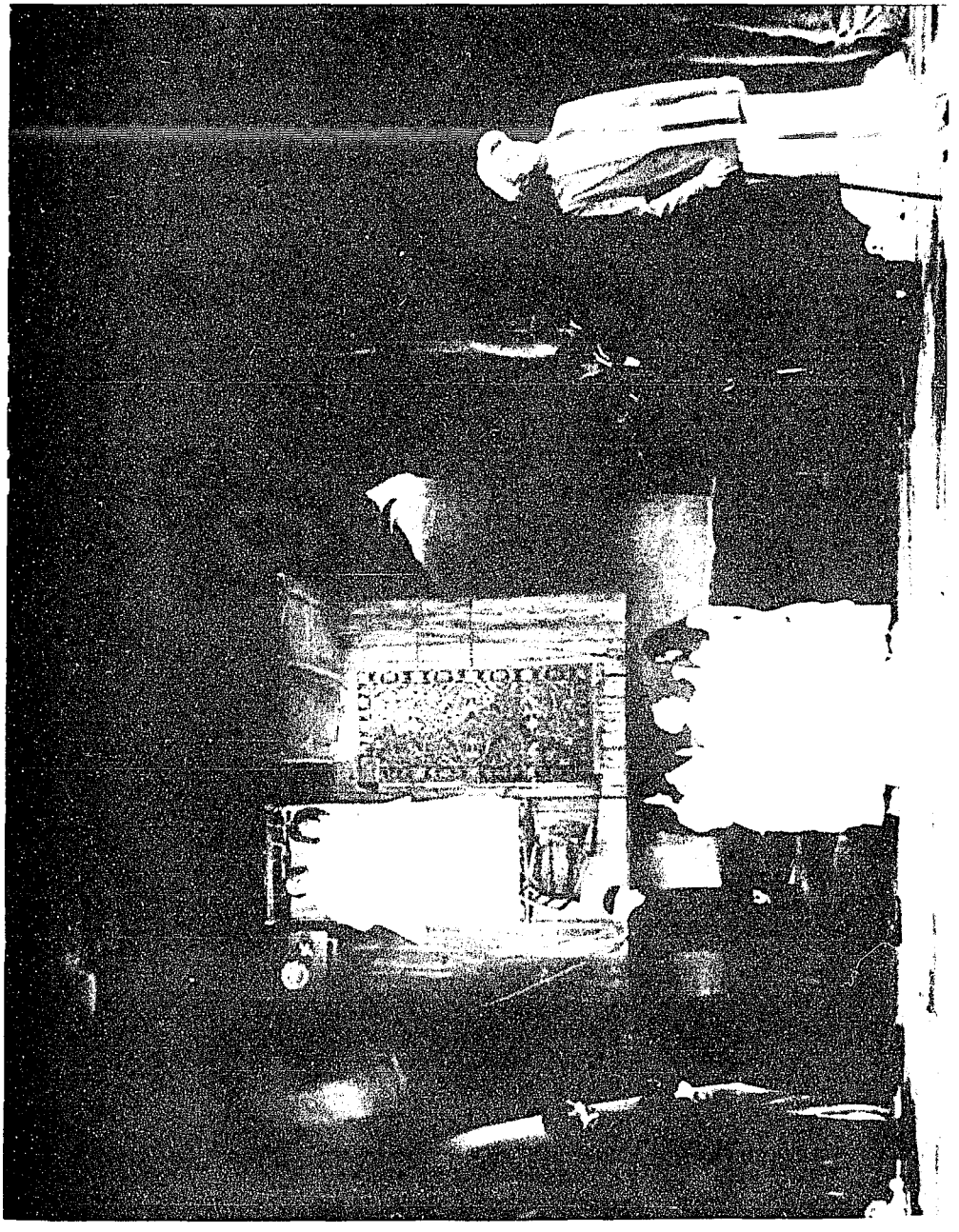
Współczesny Theatre, Wrocław, 1976.

The birth of Shem (Zbigniew Górski) as his mother-bride, Anna Livia (Teresa Sawicka), watches.



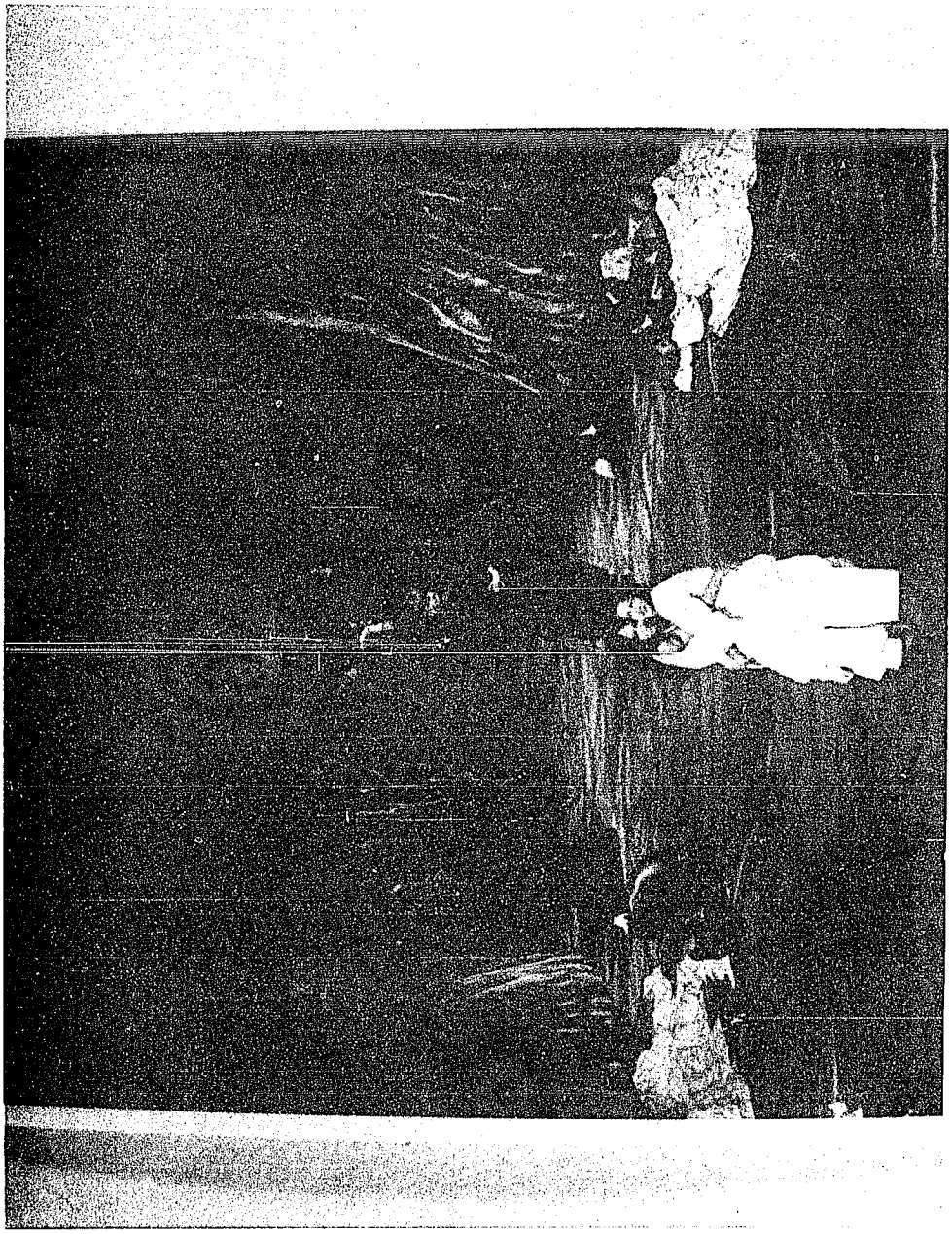
8. Anna Livia. Współczesny Theatre, 1976.

Shem dreams of both his old mother and of Anna Livia.



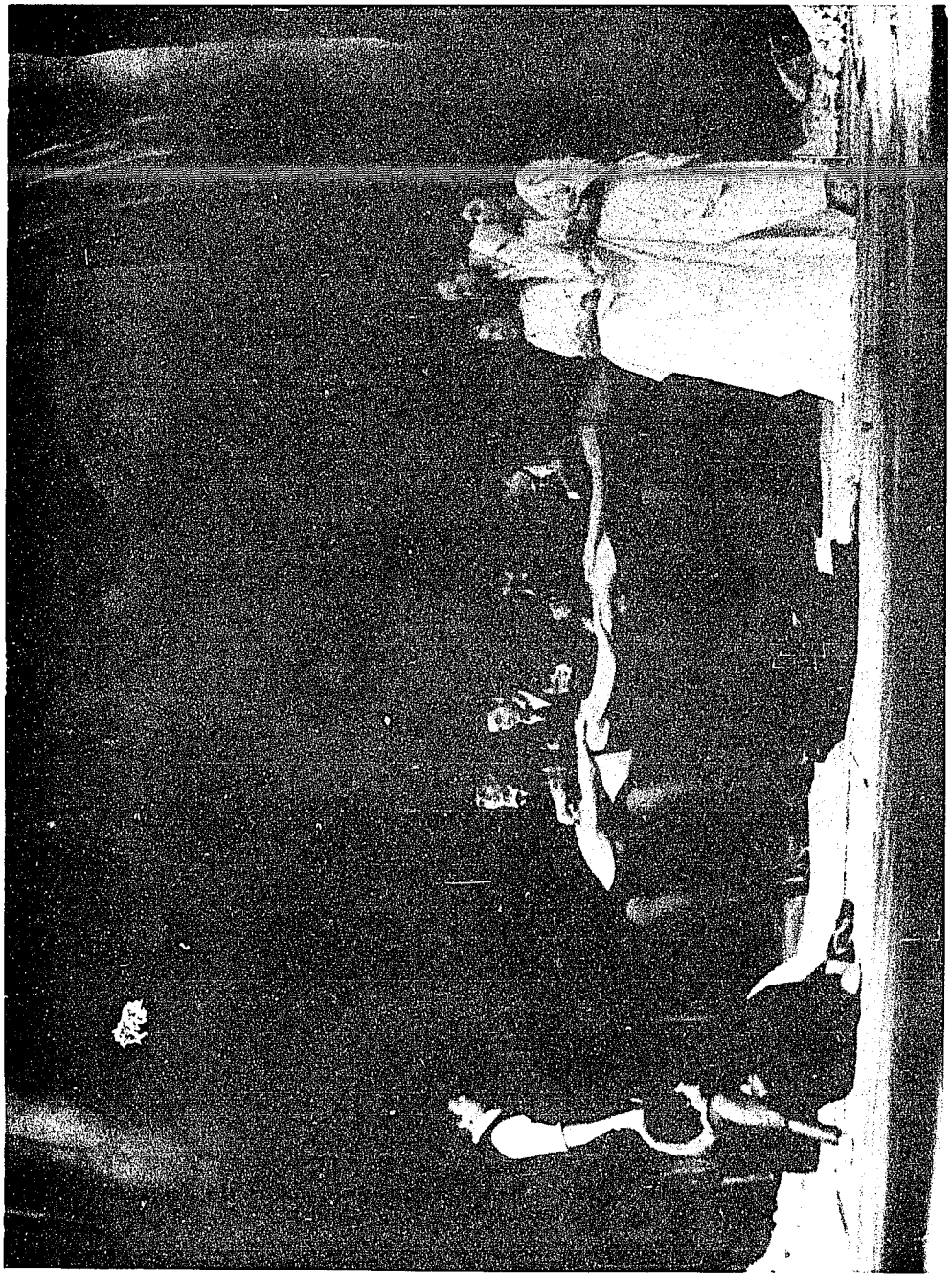
9. Anna Livia. Współczesny Theatre, 1976.

"The Underworld"



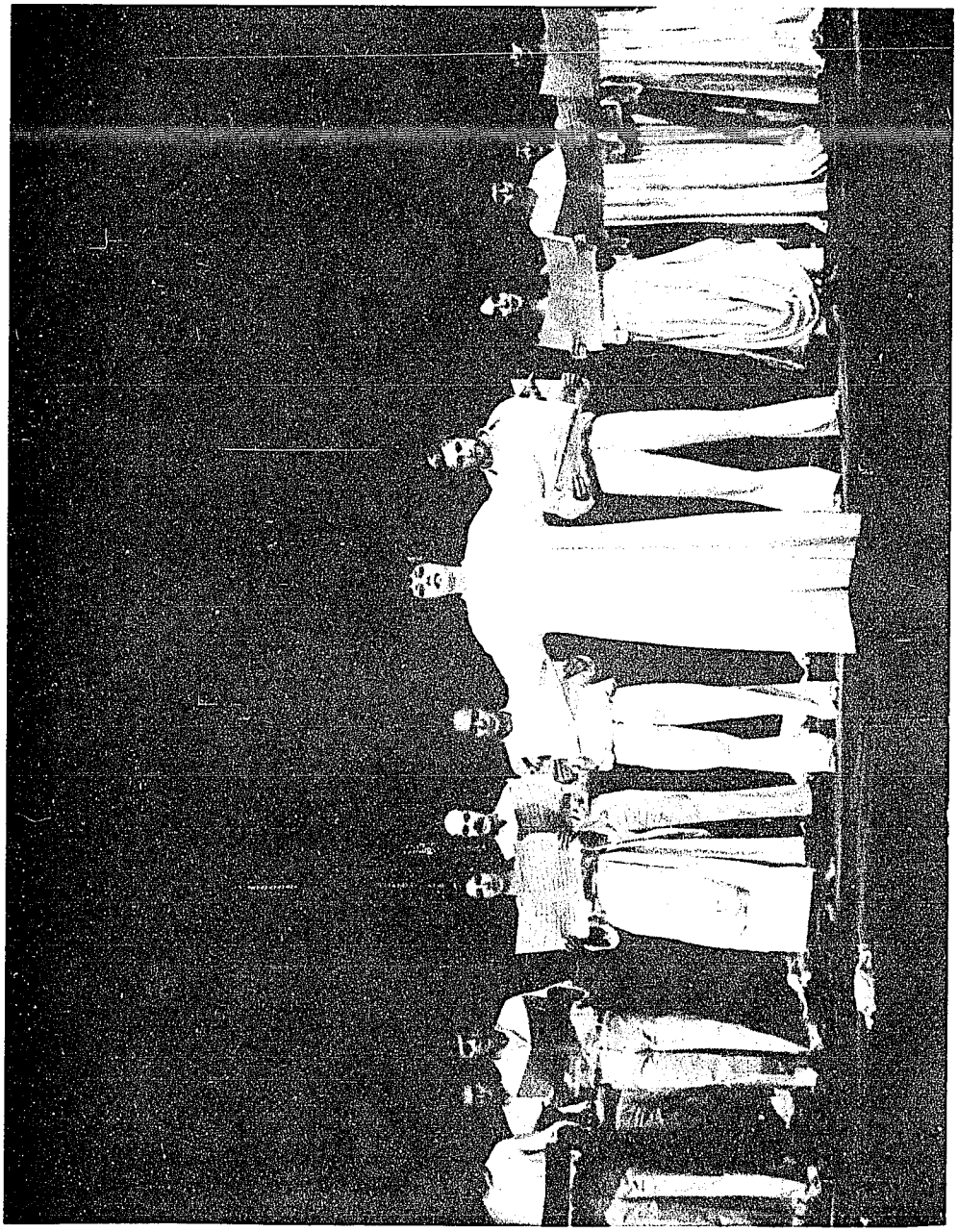
10. Anna Livia. Współczesny Theatre, 1976.

"The Shakespeare Debate"



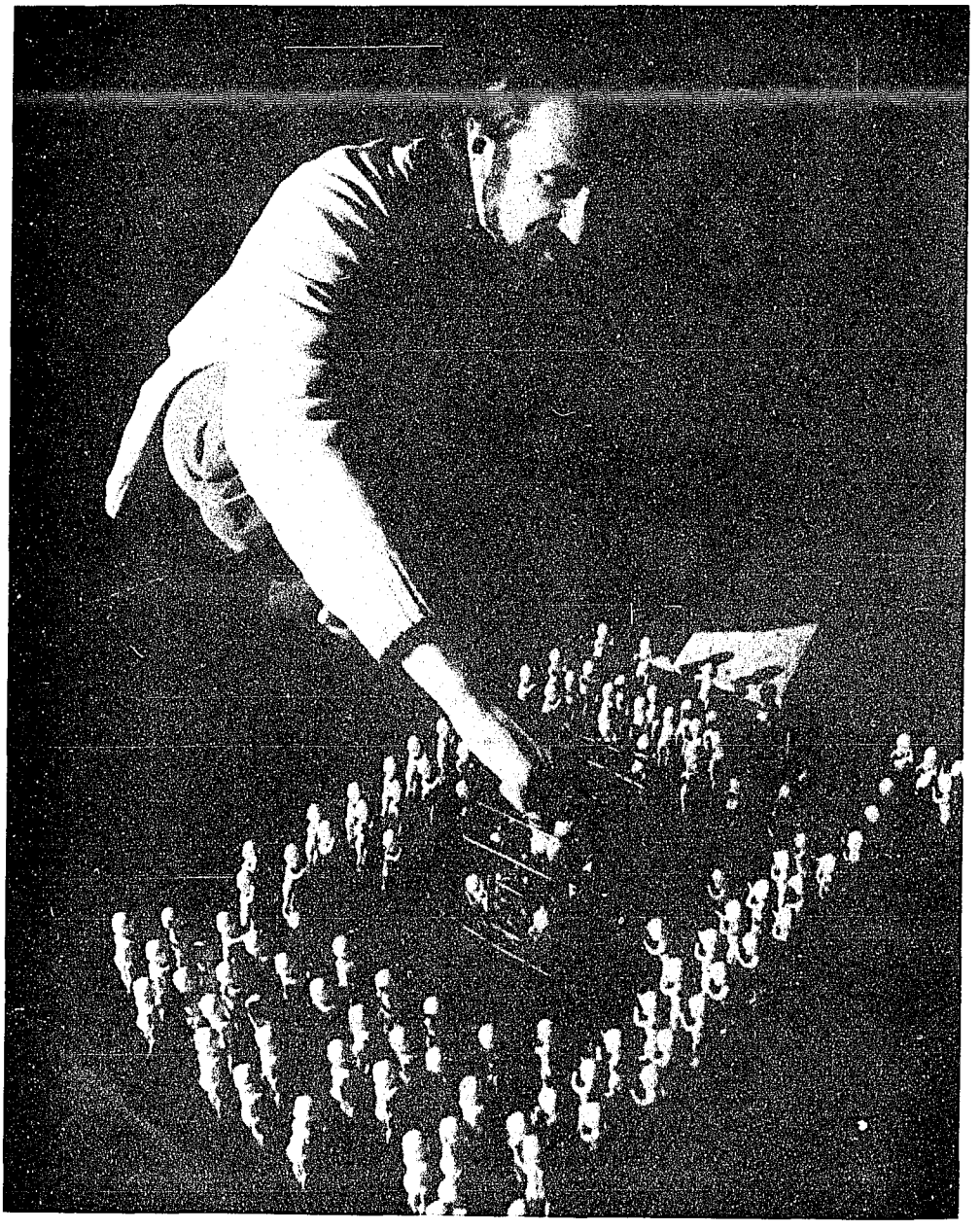
11. Anna Livia. Współczesny Theatre, 1976.

The final choral "cantata" celebrating woman, water, and eternal life.



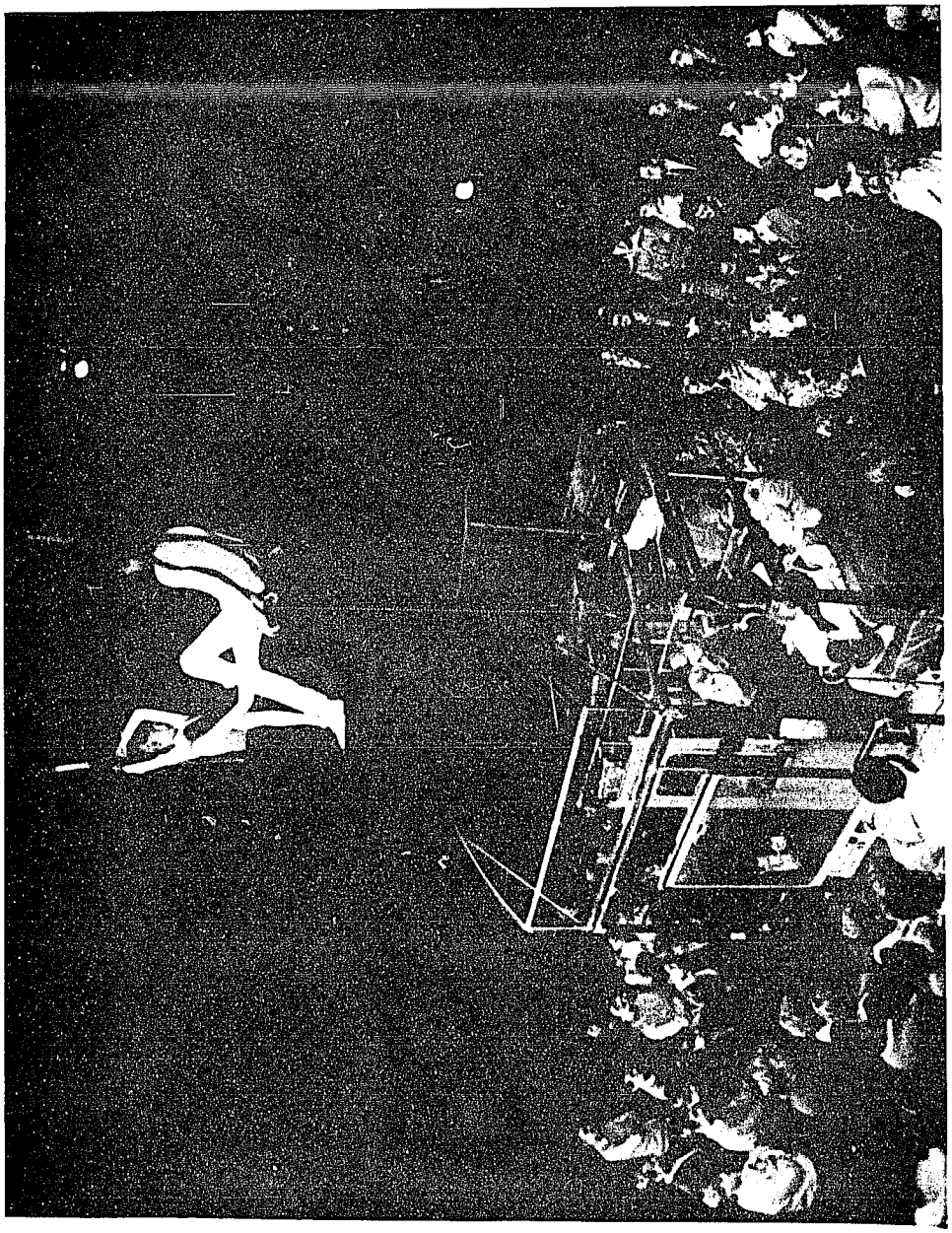
12. Birth Rate, by Tadeusz Różewicz.
Współczesny Theatre, Wrocław, 1979.

Stage 1: "Conversations about Birth Rate," led by Kazimierz Braun.



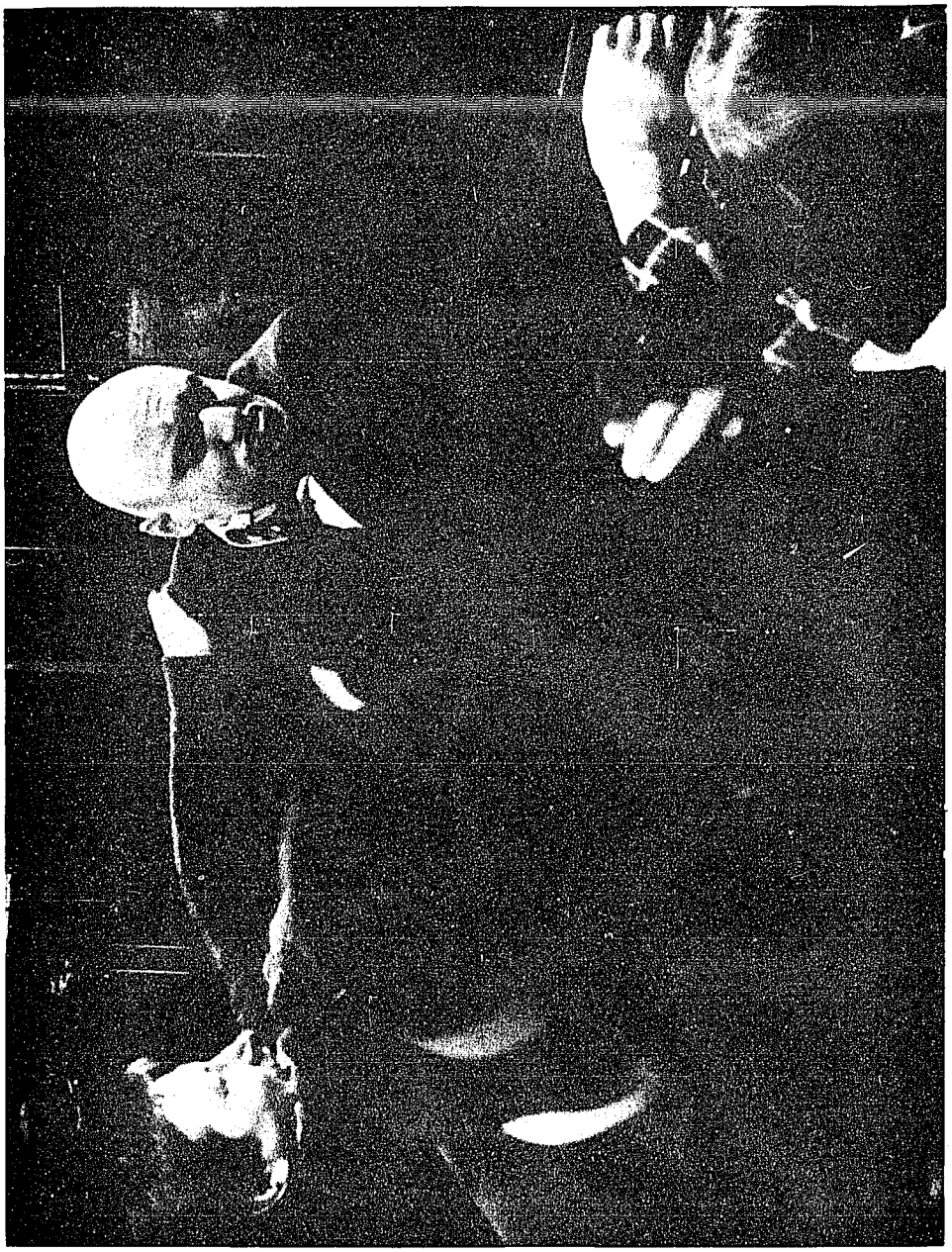
13. Birth Rate. Współczesny Theatre, 1979.

The climactic streetcar scene.



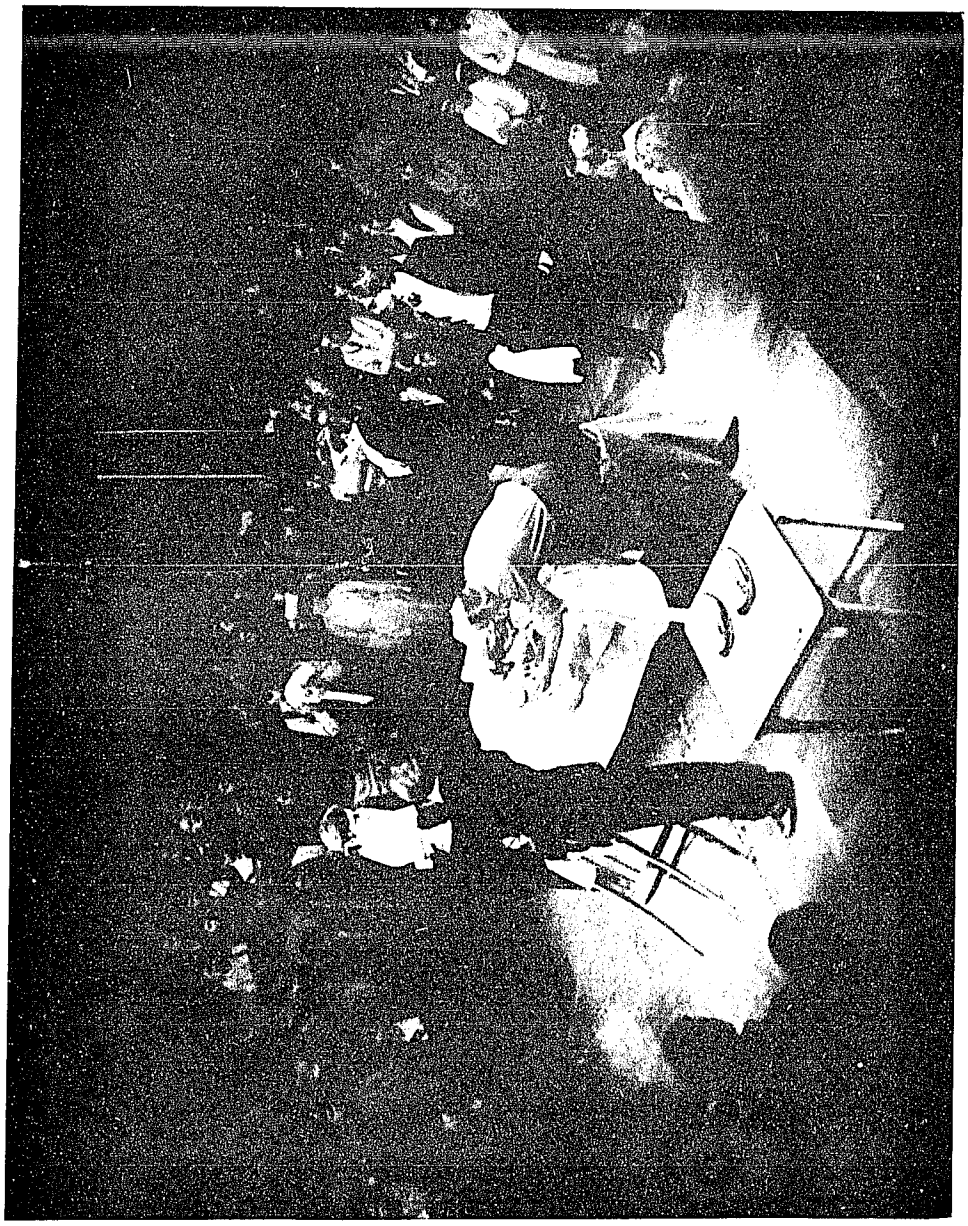
14. Birth Rate. Współczesny Theatre, 1979.

"The growing mass of mankind which destroys all forms."



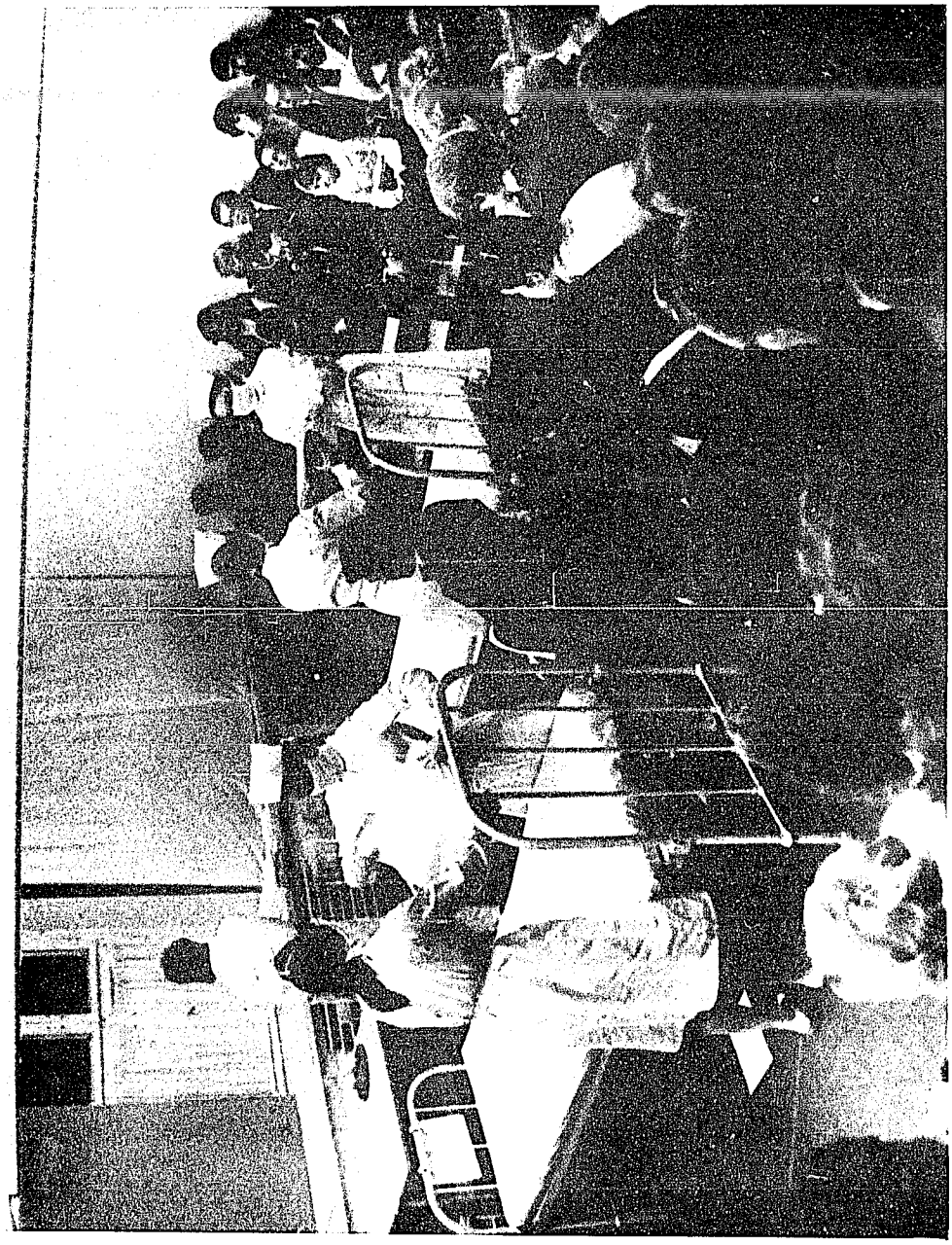
15. The Plague, by Kazimierz Braun.
Based on the novel by Albert Camus.
Współczesny Theatre, Wrocław, 1983.

The Caretaker (Zdisław Kuzniar) dies of the plague.



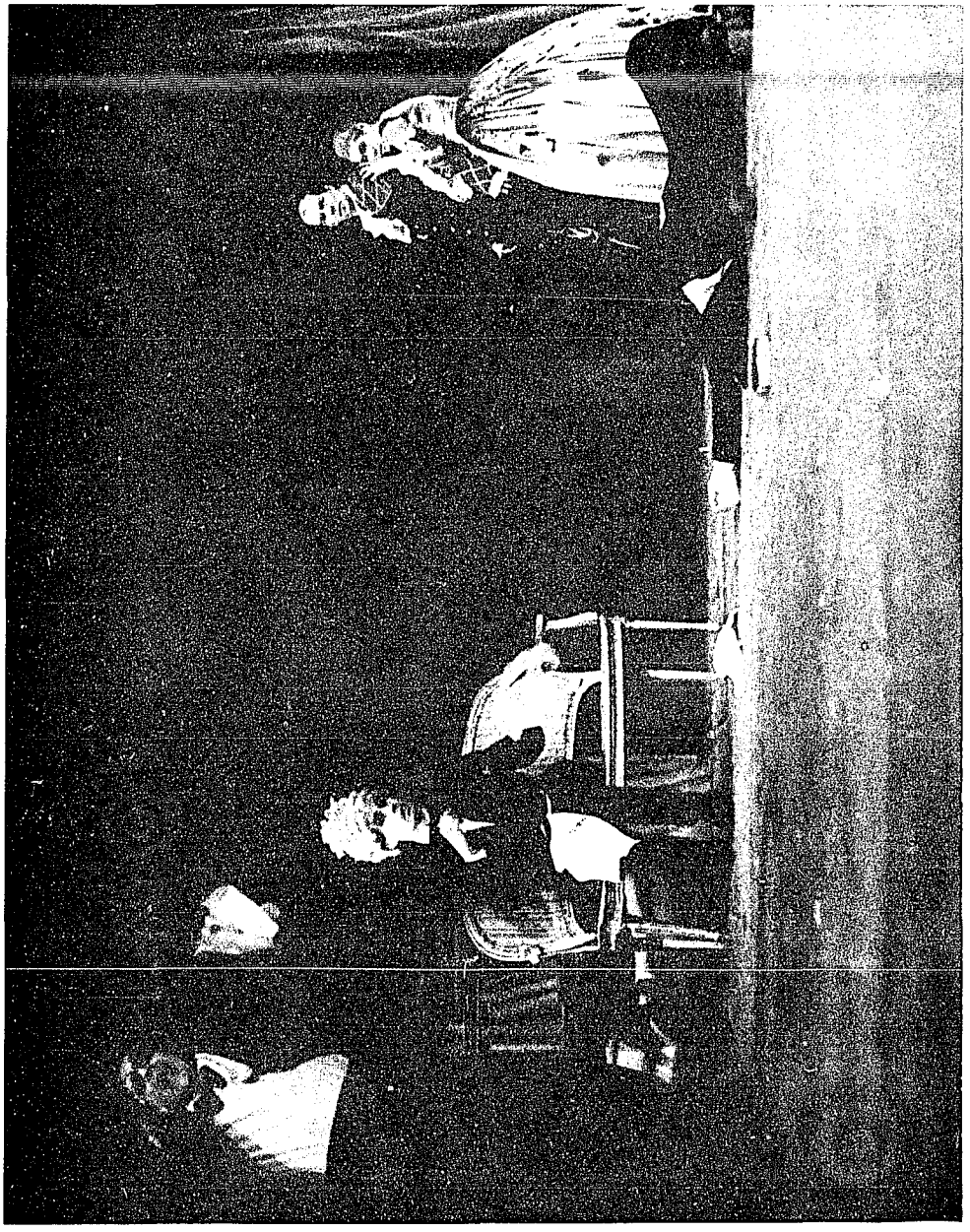
16. The Plague, Współczesny Theatre, 1983.

Removing the dead from their hospital beds.



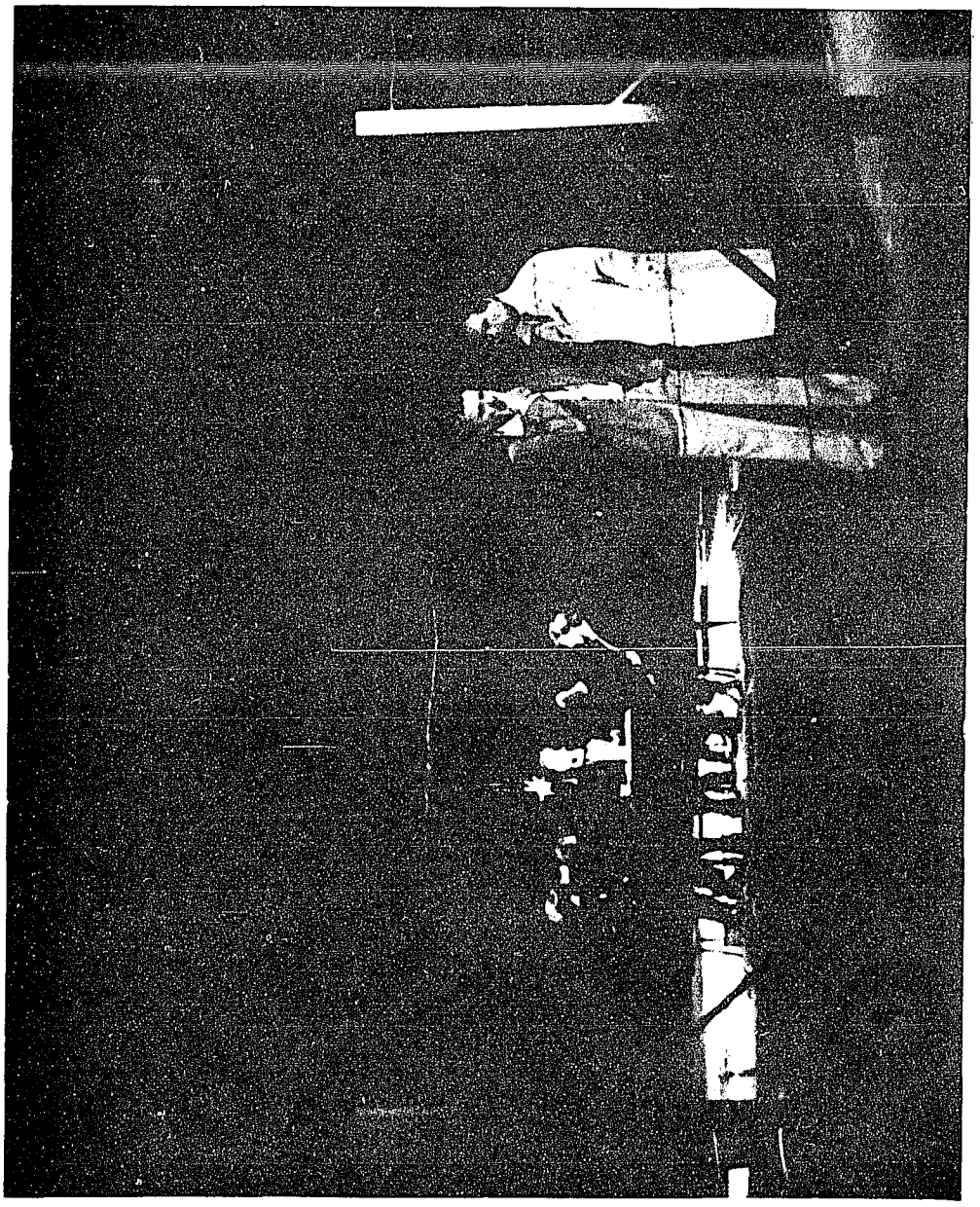
17. The Plague. Współczesny Theatre, 1983.

The Rats usurp the performance of Learned Ladies.



18. <u>The Plague</u>. Współczesny Theatre, 1983.

The teacher, Tarrou (Andrzej Wilk), and Doctor Rieux (Andrzej Mrożek) discuss the meaning of sainthood behind the barbed wire barrier.



NOTES

INTRODUCTION

1. Reżyseria to sztuka tworzenia i chronienia życia . . ., powoływania życia, ujawniania życia, stwarzania warunków do rodzenia się życia. Kazimierz Braun, "Engulf Them With the Mystery" (Otocz ich tajemnicą), trans. by the author, in Excess of Theatre (Nadmiar teatru) (Warsaw: Czytelnik Warszawa, 1984), 274.

2. Kazimierz Braun, "Three American Theaters: An Opinion," Directors Notes 3 (no. 2, 1988): 2.

3. Jonathan Schell, "Reflections (Poland)," New Yorker (February 3, 1986): 65. This article provides an eloquent account of how the Poles, beginning in the mid-seventies, attempted to create a "civil society" that would operate completely independent of the regime. This new society did not act in opposition to the regime, but as if the regime did not, in fact, exist. Schell terms this idea a politics of "obliviousness."

Chapter I. THE THEATRE OF THE COMMUNITY: A DEFINITION

1. Kazimierz Braun, "Theatre Space: Postulates," Slavic and East European Arts (Special Issue: Recent Polish and Soviet Theatre and Drama) 3 (no. 1, 1985): 86.

2. Tymon Terlecki, Stanisław Wyspiański, Twayne World Authors Series (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1983), chap. 7, "Towards a Theatre of the Nation," 97-109.

3. Lawrence Weschler, The Passion of Poland: From Solidarity to the State of War (New York: Pantheon Books, 1982), 171.

4. Marta Fik, "Leon Schiller: the Twenty-fifth Anniversary of His Death," Theatre in Poland 21 (no. 8, 1979): 7.

5. Neal Ascherson, The Polish August: the Self-Limiting Revolution (New York: Penguin Books, 1982), 91-92.

6. Daniel Gerould, "Jerzy Grotowski's Theatrical and Para-Theatrical Activities as Cosmic Drama: Roots and Continuities," World Literature Today 54 (Summer, 1980): 381.

7. Justyna Hoffman, "The Creative Career of Kazimierz Braun," unpublished manuscript, trans. Anna Michońska-Stadnik, 2. Given to me by Kazimierz Braun. This manuscript was an official archival document, prepared by Ms. Hoffman, for distribution by Współczesny Theatre to journalists, critics, and scholars. Ms. Hoffman was the literary secretary of the theatre, responsible for the library and archives.

8. Stanislaw Rodziński, quoted in Halina Filipowicz, "Gardienice: a Polish Expedition to Baltimore," The Drama Review 30 (no. 1, Spring, 1987): 158.

9. Jacek Weksler, interview with the director at his home in Wrocław, Poland, 25 July 1987.

10. Kazimierz Braun, interview with the director at his home in Buffalo, New York, 19 June 1987.

11. Ibid.

12. Jean Darcante, address to the Theatre of Nations Symposium, Warsaw, Poland, 1975, quoted in Roman Szydłowski, "New Trends in Contemporary Theatre," Theatre in Poland 17 (nos. 11-12, 1975): 38.

13. Braun interview, 19 June 1987.

14. Kazimierz Braun, Teatr Wspólnoty ("The Theatre of the Community"), trans. James Schlatter, in Druga Reforma Teatru? (The Second Reform of the Theatre?) (Wrocław, Warsaw, Gdańsk, Kraków: Ossilineum, 1977), 111-154.

15. w jednym czasie i miejscu. Braun, "The Theatre of the Community," 111. I have translated this phrase rather freely in part because Justyna Hoffman uses the phrase "here and now" also to describe Braun's theory of theatre.

16. Braun interview, 19 June 1987.

17. zbiorowej twórczości aktorów i widzów. Wspólnie. Na scenie i widnowni. Braun, "Theatre of the Community," 111.

18. Two of Braun's major books of critical theory are Wielka Reforma Teatru w Europie (The Great Reform of the Theatre in Europe) and Druga Reforma Teatru? See note no. 14.

19. teatrem nieoswojonym. Braun, "Theatre of the Community," 113.

20. Braun, "Theatre Space: Postulates," 85.

21. Ibid., 86.

22. Professor Emil Orżechowski, interview with the critic at his home in Kraków, Poland, 30 July 1987.

Chapter II. KAZIMIERZ BRAUN'S THEATRE WORK: AN HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

1. Orżechowski interview, 30 July 1987.

2. Jerzy Tymicki, "New Dignity: Polish Theatre, 1970-1985," The Drama Review 30 (no. 3, Fall, 1986): 23.

3. Halina Filipowicz, "Polish Theatre: 'Message Over the Medium,'" The Drama Review 31 (no. 2, 1987): 28.

4. Weschler, Passion of Poland, 7.

5. Stewert Stevens, The Poles (New York: Macmillan Publishing Co., Inc., 1982), chap. 11, "The Intellectuals," 222. This chapter is one of the most pointed and thorough accounts of the profound gulf that existed in Poland between intellectuals and the workers up until the time of Solidarity.

6. Adam Michnik, quoted in Jonathan Schell, "Reflections (Poland)," 60.

7. Edward Chudziński, "Toward the Open Theatre," Theatre in Poland 21 (nos. 5-6, 1979): 25-28.

8. Ibid., 27.

9. Roman Szydłowski, "Polish Theatre Closer to Contemporary Life," Theatre in Poland 19 (no. 7, 1977): 19-22.

10. Ibid., 20.

11. Sławomir Mrożek, The Emigrés (Emigranci), trans. Maciej and Teresa Wrona with Robert Holman, The New Review (London, 1976): 23-44. Copy located in the Center for the Advanced Study of Theatre Art archives, City University of New York, New York, NY.

12. Roman Szydłowski, "New Trends in Contemporary Theatre," 40. See note no. 12, Chap. I.

13. Ibid., 38.

14. Orzechowski interview, 30 July 1987.

15. Ibid.

16. The most complete study of Norwid in English is by George Gömori, Cyprian Norwid, Twayne World Authors' Series (New York: Twayne Publishers, 1974).

17. Quoted in Justyna Hoffman, "The Creative Career of Kazimierz Braun," 2.

18. Ibid., 3.

19. Kazimierz Braun, "Tadeusz Różewicz: a Playwright for the Electronic Age," trans. Richard Sokoloski, 4. Appeared originally as "Tadeusz Różewicz: dramaturge de l'ere électronique," Acta Universitatis Wratislaviensis, 462 (1979): 115-125. Located in the Center for the Advanced Study of Theatre Art archives.

20. Krystyna Demska, "Birth Rate (A Biography of a Stage Play), by Tadeusz Różewicz, directed by Kazimierz Braun, with stage design by Krzysztof Zarębski, and music by Zbigniew Karnecki, at the Teatr Współczesny," Theatre In Poland 22 (no. 6, 1980): 14-16.

21. jedną z bardzo już nielicznych szczęśliwych personalnych decyzji w kulturalnym życiu Wrocławia lat siedemdziesiątych. Józef Kelera, Wrocław teatralny, 1945-1980, pp. 345-358 (the section devoted to Braun's work), trans. Krystyna Kornacka-Matusiak (Wrocław, Warsaw, Kraków, Gdańsk: Ossolinieum, 1983), 345.

22. I was given a tour of Współczesny Theatre by Anna Witkowska on 25 July 1987.

23. Tadeusz Różewicz, Birth Rate: the Biography of a Play for the Theatre, trans. Daniel Gerould, in Twentieth Century Polish Avant-Garde Theatre and Drama, ed. Daniel Gerould (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1977), 269-279.

24. Ibid., 270.

25. Anna Witkowska, interview with the Public Relations Director in Wrocław, 23 July 1987.

Chapter III. THE THEATRE IS A BUILDING

1. Kazimierz Braun, interview with the director at his home in Buffalo, New York, 17 June 1988.

2. Kazimierz Braun, "Contemporary Theatre in Search of Sacrum" (Teatr współczesny w poszukiwaniu sacrum), in Dramat: Teatr Sakralny, ed. Ireny Stawińska, and others (Lublin: Redakcja Wydawictw Katolickiego Universytetku Lubelskiego, 1988), quoted from the English summary, p. 44.

3. For a critical investigation of Polish drama and theatre in the sixties see E. J. Czerwinski, "Dramatists in Search of Self," and Zbigniew Folejewski, "Theatre of Ruthless Metaphor: Polish Theatre Between Marxism and Existentialism," in Comparative Drama III (Fall, 1969): 210-217 and 176-183.

4. Elżbieta Wysińska, "Directors' Theatre: Making the Classics Contemporary," in Twentieth Century Polish Theatre, ed. Bohdan Drozdowski (London: John Calder Ltd., Dallas: Riverrun Press, Inc., 1979), 19.

5. For a discussion of the work of several directors of this young generation see Witold Filler, Contemporary Polish Theatre, Chapter III, "Repertoire and Polish Stage Directors," 42-60.

6. Justyna Hoffman, "The Creative Career of Kazimierz Braun," 2.

7. Braun interview, 17 June 1988.

8. Stanisław Wyspiański, Deliverance, quoted in Terlecki, 90.

9. Cyprian Norwid, quoted in Julian Krzyżanowski, A History of Polish Literature, trans. Doris Ronowicz (Warsaw: Polish Scientific Publishers, 1978), 301.

10. Ibid., 303.

11. Cyprian Norwid, quoted in George Gömöri, Cyprian Norwid, 91.

12. I attended a performance of Karol Wojtyła's play God's Brother at the Słowacki in the summer of 1983.

13. realistycznej motywacji układu dramaturgicznego. Zygmunt Greń, "Wax Tear and a Diamond," (Łza z wosku diament), trans. Helena White, Życie Literackie (no. 40, 1970): 7.

14. polemizując z Horzyca. Ibid., 8.

15. nie bardzo sie już dziwimy że taki Tertej został przez publiczność wygwizdany. Ibid.

16. Czy popiół tylko zostanie i zamęt,/Co idzie w przepaść z burzą?--czy/zostanie/Na dnie popiołu gwiaździsty diament. Ibid.

17. sprowadzać do upodobań współczesnego odbiorcy. Ibid.

18. Justyna Hoffman, 1.

19. Braun interview, 17 June 1988.

20. Ibid.

21. . . . na wskroś współczesny, a jednocześnie bliski Wyspiańskiemu. Michał Kasperowicz, "The Wedding: 1965" (Wesele: 1965), trans. Helena White, Teatr 21 (no. 7, 1966): 8.

22. projekcja marzeń pragnień podświadomych. Ibid.

23. tonacji miękkiej lirycznej. Ibid.

24. ogromna ogólnonarodowa kupa. Ibid.

25. . . . aktorzy grają jakby byli częścia publiczności wysuniętą na scenę. Ibid.

26. Braun interview, 17 June 1988.

27. Bożena Frankowska, "Theatre Wybrzeże of Gdańsk," Theatre In Poland 14 (no. 2, 1972): 7.

28. Ryrzard Kowalski, "The Theatre at the Gdańsk Coal Market Place," Theatre In Poland 7 (no. 6, 1965): 3-9.

29. Terlecki, 62.

30. Ibid., 64.

31. Zygmunt Greń, "There Are No Laurels . . ." (Laurów nie ma . . .), trans. Helena White, Teatr 22 (no. 14, 1967): 5-7.

32. grech wiary w sprawiedliwość historii. Ibid., 6.

33. doskonale beznamiętnymi prawami egzysencji. Ibid.

34. perspektyw ogólnoludzkich. Ibid.

35. Justyna Hoffman, 5.

36. Elżbieta Wysińska, "Directors' Theatre," 23.

37. For a complete synopsis and analysis of Deliverance see Terlecki, 82-96.

38. Ibid., 82.

39. Ibid., 83.

40. Ibid., 84.

41. One of the strongest and most wide-ranging critiques of the entire open theatre movement came from August Grodzicki, "What's New in Polish Theatre," Theatre in Poland 22 (nos. 3-4, 1980): 15-23, who saw the traditional theatre of great literature and inspired acting being eclipsed by the new theatre of the director as absolute auteur: "With careless abandon they (directors) launched upon the slaughter of the text with an overwhelming onslaught of visual devices and of foggy and muddled thinking" (p. 15). Grodzicki sees the return to a theatre of concrete reality and social issues in the late seventies as a rejection of the indulgent theatrical whimsy of unrestrained directors.

42. E. J. Czerwinski, interview with the critic at his home in Port Jefferson, New York, 19 April 1989.

Chapter IV. DEMOLISHING SPACE WITHIN THE THEATRE SPACE

1. In an interview with Krzysztof Sielicki, a critic for the journal Teatr, in New York on February 15, 1989, he made the observation that Braun had been given that mandate by the then-Artistic Director Jerzy Toronczyk, who willingly stepped aside to become Managing Director of the theatre. Like Braun, Toronczyk was an extremely well-educated man with a great love of literature and philosophy. But he was a very traditional director, and was getting on in years (he died in 1971). It is a measure of Toronczyk's devotion to Osterwa Theatre that he sought to form a creative partnership with someone who could take the theatre where he could not. Sielicki believes that Braun more than fulfilled his

mandate for Osterwa. It should be mentioned that it is unusual for a non-Party member to be granted such a position of authority. Toronczyk was assisted in getting Braun installed at Osterwa by Stanisław Balicki, the General Director of the Ministry of Culture, who had given Braun his first professional staff position at Teatr Polski in 1962. At the time Balicki was the Artistic Director of the theatre in Warsaw.

2. Kazimierz Braun, interview with the director at his home in Buffalo, New York, 18 June 1988.

3. Among the many fine articles on the theatre and drama of Tadeusz Różewicz see Edward J. Czerwinski, "Tadeusz Różewicz and the Jester-Priest Metaphor," The Slavic and East European Journal, XIII (no. 2, 1969): 217-228; and Halina Filipowicz, "Theatrical Reality in the Plays of Tadeusz Różewicz," The Slavic and East European Journal, XXVI (no. 4, 1982): 447-459.

4. Józef Kelera, "The Różewicz Theatre," Theatre In Poland 10 (no. 10, 1975): 7.

5. Braun interview, 18 June 1988.

6. Tadeusz Różewicz, The Interrupted Act, in The Card Index and Other Plays, trans. Adam Czerniawski (New York: Grove Press, Inc., 1969), 1-32.

7. Halina Filipowicz, "Theatrical Reality," 451.

8. The Interrupted Act, 3.

9. Ibid., 4.

10. Ibid.

11. Ibid., 29.

12. Ibid., 20.

13. Ibid., 25.

14. Ibid., 27.

15. Ibid., 15.

16. E. J. Czerwinski, "Tadeusz Różewicz and the Jester-Priest Metaphor," 224-25.

17. The Interrupted Act, 6.

18. Both Halina Filipowicz and the critic Marta Fik remark on the lively intellectual playfulness and rollicking comic spirit of The Interrupted Act in their respective discussions of the production. See note no. 3 and no. 21.

19. Rozmovy o dramacie: wokoł dramaturgii otwartej ("Conversations On the Drama: On the Subject of Open Dramaturgy"), Dialog 14 (no. 7, 1969): 101-108.

20. The Interrupted Act, 4.

21. Marta Fik, "In Defense of Różewicz or In Defense of Theatre" (W obronie Różewicza czy w obronie teatru), trans. Helena White, Teatr 25 (no. 9, 1970): 15-17.

22. do głośniejszych premier sezonu, . . . stanie się z pewnością w Lublinie bestsellerm. Ibid., 17.

23. dziwacznych--bo sprzecznych ze zwyczajem--poczynan. Ibid., 16.

24. Braun, "The Theatre of the Community," 116.

25. Robert Brustein, "A Living Audience: Tonight We Improvise," in Seasons of Discontent: Dramatic Opinions, 1959-1965 (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1967), 32.

26. Braun interview, 18 June 1988.

27. Jerzy Grotowski, Towards a Poor Theatre (New York: Simon and Schuster, A Touchstone Book, 1968), 22.

28. Tadeusz Różewicz, The Old Woman Broods, trans. Adam Czerniawski, in The Witnesses and Other Plays (London: Calder and Boyars, 1970), 60-108.

29. Ibid., 91.

30. Ibid., 69.

31. Ibid., 108.

32. These two methods of creating theatre are discussed by the critic Krzysztof Sielicki in his description/ analysis of the production, "The Osterwa Theatre: The Old Woman Broods" (Teatr im. Osterwy: Stara kobieta wysiaduje), trans. Jacob Conrad, Dialog XIX (no. 3, 1975), 132-142.

33. The Interrupted Act, 22.

34. . . . w atmosferę dramatu Różewicza, by możliwe było myślenie kategoriami życiz w śmietniku. Praca ta miała dokonać się w świadomości aktorów, zaś tekst stałby się dopełmieniem tworzonego świata. Ibid., 136.

35. szczenięta do suki. Ibid., 133.

36. . . . stworzyła szansę by postawić na siebie. . . . iście heroiczny wysiłek podjęty przez zespół. . . . Ibid., 138.

37. . . . balansuje na krawędzi między prawdą o sobie, a prawdą o człowiek ze świata-śmietniska. Ibid., 137.

38. . . . wizja zgniłego świata zyskała nieoczekiwaną alternatywę w świecie rzeczywistym. Podwórko, ulica, drzewa nie były już koszmarem, ich konkretnośc nadawała wizjim wymiar bajki. Ibid., 140.

39. . . . szansę rzeczywistą: na imię jejwyobraźnia. . . . Od siły ich woli zależy, czy będą potrafili ułudę, marzenie, rajzmaterializować. . . . realna rzeczywistośc, stwarza człowiekowi możliwości, których brak rzeczywistości fikcyjnej. Ibid.

Chapter V. RE-THEATRICALIZING THE THEATRE SPACE

1. Kazimierz Braun, Interview with the director at his home in Buffalo, New York, 22 January 1989.

2. Suma do sumy, było to jednak "we jscie" skuteczniejsze niż udzielanie jakichkolwiek wywiadów i obietnic. Kelera, Wroclaw teatralny, 346.

3. Jan Kłossowicz, "The Theatre Reform in Poland," Theatre in Poland 17 (no. 3, 1975): 24.

4. Tadeusz Różewicz, Mariage Blanc, in Mariage Blanc and The Hunger Artist Departs: Two Plays by Tadeusz Różewicz, trans. Adam Czerniawski (London, New York: Marion Boyars Publishers, 1983), 7-69.

5. Rhonda Blair, "A White Marriage: Różewicz's Feminist Drama," Slavic and East European Arts (Special Issue: Recent Polish and Soviet Theatre and Drama) 3 (no. 1, 1985): 13.

6. Daniel Gerould, Introduction, Twentieth Century Polish Avant-Garde Drama, 89.

7. Spencer Golub, "The Subject Stripped Bare: Różewicz's 'Things as Things in Themselves,'" Slavic and East European Arts (Special Issue: Recent Polish and Soviet Theatre and Drama) 3 (no. 1, 1985): 23.

8. Ibid., 24.

9. Ibid., 25.

10. Kazimierz Braun, "Tadeusz Różewicz: Playwright for the Electronic Age," 10.

11. Tadeusz Różewicz, White Marriage, TABLEAU 7: IN A BLACK WOOD, 40.

12. Braun interview, 22 January 1989.

13. White Marriage, 40.

14. Ibid., 33.

15. Ibid., 54.

16. Ibid., 69.

17. Braun interview, 22 January 1989.

18. Golub, 31.

19. Wierność inscenizacyjnym wskazówkom Różewicza cechuje całe to przedstawienie, . . . Barbara Osterloff, "White Marriage: Differently" (Białe małżenstwo: inaczej), Teatr 30 (no. 23, 1976): 11.

20. . . . rozjaśnić to co w niej ciemne, aby uczynić przejrzystym to, co mogłoby się wydawać zawiłe. Ibid.

21. . . . upiornej, ni to weselnej, ni pogrzebowej maskarady. Ibid., 12.

22. Marta Fik, "Mariage Blanc by Tadeusz Różewicz, directed by Tadeusz Minc with stage design by Andrzej Sadowski at the Teatr Mały in Warsaw," Theatre in Poland 17 (no. 9, 1975): 14.

23. Józef Kelera, "The Różewicz Theatre," 11.

24. . . . instynktami i kompleksami, które ten konwenans łamią. Osterloff, 12.

25. . . . jest pomyślany precyzyjnie i skomponowany w każdym szczególe z dbaloscią o malarską urode całości. Ibid.

26. Małgorzata Dzieduszycka, "'Anna Livia' by Maciej Słomczyński, based on James Joyce's works, directed at the Teatr Współczesny of Wrocław by Kazimierz Braun, designed by Zofia de Inez-Lewczuk, music by Zbigniew Karnecki," Theatre in Poland 19 (no. 1, 1977): 8-11.

27. Ibid., 9.

28. Anthony Burgess, Re Joyce (New York: Ballantine books, 1965), 230.

29. Ibid., 239.

30. . . . potrafił zespolić trywialność ze wzniosłością patos z humorem, że umiał pokazać przejmującą prawdę cyklu narodzin i smierci, zmienność-niezmienność ludzkiego trwania. Marek Jodłowski, quoted in Kelera, Wrocław teatralny, 349.

31. Barbara Osterloff, "From Joyce" (Z Joyce'a), Teatr 31 (no. 21, 1976): 12-13.

32. . . . realna i odrealniona zarazem, konkretna w detalach i jednocześnie poetycka w nastroju. Ibid., 13.

33. Znalazła ona dla Anny Livii zarówno ton boskości, jak i najgłębszego człowieczeństwa, naiwnej dziewczęcości i dojrzałości kobiecej, tworząc postać pełną ostrych przeciwieństw a jednak jednolitą, spójną. Ibid.

34. Marian Sienkiewicz, "Joyce in the New and Old Theatre" (Joyce w nowym i starym teatrze), Życie Literackie, October 24, 1976, 4.

35. For a description/analysis of this production see Marta Fik, "'Bloomusalem' after 'Ulysses' by James Joyce, adapted and produced by Jerzy Grzegorzewski at the 'Atelier,' the new stage of the Teatr Ateneum in Warsaw," Theatre in Poland 17 (no. 1, 1975): 21-28.

36. Braun interview, 22 January 1989.

37. . . . w których bez trudu odczytuje się intenczje filozoficzne i literackie Joyce'a. Sienkiewicz, 4.

38. . . . piękny w swojej konwencjonalnej teatralności i bardzo poetycki. Ibid.

39. Kazimierz Braun, "I Love Literature, Great Poetry, and the Keen Intelligence of Writers," Slavic and East European Arts (Special Issue: Dramaturgs and Dramaturgy) 4 (no. 1, 1986): 21.

Chapter VI. GIVING BIRTH TO THE THEATRE OF THE COMMUNITY

1. Józef Kelera, Wrocław teatralny, 349-50.

2. Ibid., 354.

3. Ibid., 353.

4. Elżbieta Zmudzka, "Polish Stage Design Over the Past 35 Years" ("Scenografia Polska w 35-Leciu (III)"), quoted in "Around the Press," Theatre in Poland 22 (no. 6, 1980): 33.

5. Tadeusz Różewicz, Birth Rate, 270.

6. Tadeusz Różewicz, "An Unfinished Examination," trans. Barbara Vedder, in The Modern Polish Mind, ed. Maria Kuncewicz (New York: Grosset and Dunlap, Grosset's Universal Library, 1963), 229-38.

7. Quoted in Halina Filipowicz, "Theatrical Reality in the Plays of Tadeusz Różewicz," 453.

8. Różewicz, Birth Rate, 272-73.

9. Ibid., 273.

10. Ibid., 271.

11. Ibid., 270.

12. Ibid., 277.

13. Ibid., 270.

14. Ibid.

15. Kazimierz Braun, interview with the director at his home in Buffalo, New York, 19 June 1988.

16. Halina Filipowicz, "The Theatre of Tadeusz Różewicz," The Carl Beck Papers in Russian and East European Studies, no. 201, ed. Ronald H. Linden, University of Pittsburgh, PA, 15.

17. Krystyna Demska, "The Birth Rate (A Biography of a Stage Play) by Tadeusz Różewicz, directed by Kazimierz Braun, with stage design by Krzysztof Zarębski and music by Zbigniew Karnecki, at the Teatr Współczesny in Wrocław," Theatre in Poland 22 (no. 6, 1980): 14. This article by Demska provides a detailed account of the performance of Birth Rate.

18. Ibid.

19. Tadeusz Różewicz, The Funny Old Man, in The Witnesses and Other Plays, trans. Adam Czerniawski (London: Calder and Boyars Ltd., 1970), 109-36.

20. Demska, 14.

21. Braun interview, 19 June 1988.

22. Różewicz, Birth Rate, 278.

23. Ibid., 270.

24. Tadeusz Różewicz, quoted in Demska, 15.

25. Tadeusz Różewicz, "Faces" (Twarze), quoted in Demska, 16.

26. Kazimierz Braun, quoted in E. J. Czerwinski, "Feasts in Time of the Plague: Polish Theatre and Drama, Post-Solidarity," Modern Drama 27 (no. 1, 1984): 50.

27. Sielicki interview, 15 February 1989.

28. . . . zachowanie twarzy. Maria Bechczyc-Rudnicka, "An Important Premiere" (Doniosła prapremiera), trans. Jacob Conrad, Teatr 35 (no. 9, 1980): 5.

29. B. A. Young, "Enter the Poles," Financial Times, London, 12 October 1981, no page number.

30. Czerwinski interview, 19 April 1989.

31. Halina Filipowicz, "The Polish Theatre: Ethics vs. Aesthetics," The Canadian Theatre Review 32 (Fall, 1981): 12.

Chapter VII. SUSTAINING THE LIFE OF THE COMMUNITY THROUGH THE THEATRE

1. Weschler, The Passion of Poland, 87.

2. I had an opportunity to observe the ZOMOs first-hand during my visit to Poland in the summer of 1983. Security had been stepped-up because of the visit of Pope John Paul II in June. The most remarkable, and unsettling thing about the ZOMOs was their slightly rumpled nonchalance. They always traveled in groups of four to six, and they wore bluish-grey fatigues with the sleeves rolled up and the collars usually open. they wore low-slung side arms and seemed almost to lounge about on the periphery of public gathering places. They looked like hired guns, which in a broad military sense they were. They also seemed to enjoy their work.

3. Adam Mickiewicz, Preface to Forefathers' Eve, trans. various hands, ed. George Rapall Noyes, with revisions by Harold B. Segel, in Polish Romantic Drama: Three Plays in English Translation, sel. and ed., with an Introduction, by Harold B. Segel (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1977), 75.

4. For an analysis of the "Digression" poems, see David Welsh, Adam Mickiewicz: Twayne World Authors Series (New York: Twayne Publishers, Inc., 1966), 105-111. Mr. Welsh's book also contains a detailed analysis of Part III of Forefathers' Eve, as well as a thorough investigation of the art and life of the poet.

5. Mickiewicz, 75.

6. Kazimierz Braun, interview with the director at his home in Buffalo, New York, 23 January 1989.

7. Albert Camus, The Plague, trans. Stuart Gilbert (New York: Alfred A. Knoff, 1948), 38-39.

8. Ibid., 278.

9. Ibid., 163.

10. Ibid., 164.

11. Braun interview, 23 January 1989.

12. Kazimierz Braun, interview conducted by Professor Ron Engle at Współczesny Theatre, Wrocław, Poland, quoted in Literature in Performance: A Journal of Literary and Performing Art 4 (no. 2, 1984): 77.

13. Camus, 200.

14. Tomasz Raczek, "The Plague, based on motifs from Albert Camus' book. Text, staging and special arrangement: Kazimierz Braun. Music: Zbigniew Karnecki. Teatr Współczesny of Wrocław," Theatre in Poland 26 (nos. 1-2, 1984): 26.

15. For a detailed description of the production, which includes excerpts of the text and photographs, see "The Plague (Dżuma): A play and mise-en-scène by Kazimierz Braun based on motifs from Daniel Defoe's A Journal of the Plague Year and Albert Camus' La Peste," The Drama Review 30 (T111) (no. 3, 1986): 47-72.

16. Ibid., 55.

17. Raczek, 26.

18. "The Plague (Dżuma)," 57-58.

19. Ibid., 61.

20. Ibid., 62.

21. Raczek, 28.

22. Ibid.

23. "The Plague (Dżuma)," 66-67.

24. Ibid., 68.

25. Ibid., 69.

26. Ibid., 72.

27. Raczek, 29.

28. E. J. Czerwinski, "Feasts in Time of the Plague: Polish Theatre and Drama, Post-Solidarity," Modern Drama 27 (no. 1, 1984): 50.

29. Sielicki interview, 15 February 1989.

30. Timothy Garten Ash, The Polish Revolution, 25.

31. These words from a poem by Cyprian Norwid have been quoted again and again by historians and scholars. Poles have been fighting for "a few ideas" for over two hundred years of their noble and bloody history. Timothy Garten Ash borrows several lines from Norwid for the epigraph of his book, The Polish Revolution:

> Colossal armies, valiant generals,
> Police--secret, open, and of sexes two--
> Against whom have they joined together?
> Against a few ideas . . . nothing new!

Chapter VIII. EPILOGUE AND FINAL ASSESSMENT

1. Czerwinski, "Feasts in Time of the Plague," 49.

2. Tadeusz Różewicz, The Trap, trans. Adam Czerniawski (City University of New York, New York: Institute for Contemporary Eastern European Drama and Theatre, Playscripts in Translation Series, No. 8, a CASTA Publication, 1984).

3. For a brief description and critical analysis of Braun's production of The Trap see Małgorzata Dzieduszycka, "The Trap on the stage," Theatre in Poland 26 (nos. 6-7, 1984): 45-48.

4. For a description and analysis of Braun's production of The Hunger Artist Departs see Marc Robinson, "All the World's a Cage," Theater 19 (no. 1, 1987): 81-85.

5. Kazimierz Braun, The Comet's Sign, English version revised by Thomas Leff and Craig Williamson. Unpublished manuscript. Copyright, 1986, by the author. Given to me by the author.

6. Czerwinski interview, 19 April 1989.

7. Sielicki interview, 15 February 1989.

8. Kazimierz Braun, Immigrant Queen, trans. John Kubiniec. Unpublished manuscript. Copyright, 1989, by the author. Given to me by the author.

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