SESSIONS IN THEORY
WITH
LUDWIG FLASZEN

"This seminar will not be the usual systematic seminar one could conduct. I will discuss along with you on many subjects. Any concrete theme will be a pretext for us to become more general.
For Saturday prepare a small composition entitled WHAT IS BEAUTY. Dont look for an aesthetic definition of the word write about it as you see it. It will be a stepping stone toward other discussions.
ARTAUD: THE THEATRE AND ITS DOUBLE will be the book we will all be obliged to read . Artaud will be our trampolin.

TEXT

We talk of text in the theatre. Text doesnt have one direction. It has many. What can we say about the text ;

- Text is words spoken bu actors.
- Text is situation.
- Text is character
- Text is sometimes a vision of the theatre.
- Text indicates theatrical interpretation.

When we say that the THEATRE treats the text as a pretext we must ask what in the text do we not use- what do we throw away. For example ih Grotowskis production of AKROPOLIS there was no intervention with the etxt. Wyspianskis words were kept as written. Nothing was written by us although we did add other texts as needed. This of course means the drama was not played as written. The words were kept but an original montage was created. Always remember the text allows for broad possibilities of interpretation. When you create your montage your THEATRE PIECE is more concrete than the written text.

A HAMLET SPEECH

(Here he quoted two lines which I cannot interpret since he spoke in Polish and I couldnt catch or place the lines)
What does the speech I just quoted mean? Is Hamlet making himself believe that he did something or is he saying I am GOING to do it? What ever you belie ve to be happening here will dtermine your choice and thus the actor will speak it differently in each case. All this comes from the text...What is not concrete in the text is did he say it to himself, to the king, to the audience So these two lines of Shakespeare can present infinite roads! The text alone never underline the specific...But all I have said are within the boundries of normal theatre- the theatre which claims to seek the interpretation of the author.

BUT

HOW DO WE KNOW WHAT SHAKESPEARE HAD ON HIS MIND ?

We dont. If we saw a production done by Shakespeare himself we might know. So it is a little hypocritical to say that " Shakespeare meant this--etc."
A THEATRE THAT HAS NOTHING TO SAY ITSELF, ALWAYS IS SAYING THAT THE AUTHOR SAID THIS- OR- THAT!

What is meant to be fidelity to the author is mostly related to old theatrical traditions and NOt the author.

Example:
Chekhov and Stanislawski

Today we think of Chekhov according to the way he was produced by Stanislawski! We play him full of sadness etc. We even read him that way...All this comes from Stanislawskis influence. Chekhov protested against this but it didnt help him. " I write a vaudeville and you make a heavy drama of it!" But Stanislavsky won. We now do Chekhov according to the Stanislawsky tradition...In Poland, a parady of Chekhov was criticized as disrespect to the author!

Every author is played according to a tradition that our great grandfather remember. Now it is not necessarily close to the way it was done in the authors time, but rather closer to actual rememberence by our forfathers.

The GLOBE & Shakespeare:

The GLOBE was Shakespeares theatre. He thought of as a working place- subconsiously. He wrote consciously for the convention of the GLOBE If we were to be true to Shakespeare we would have to reconstruct the Globe---but my feeling is that this would not be enough....FOR EVERY VISION OF THE THEATRE HAS BEEP MODERN ASSOCIATIONS

Different people meet at the Globe. It was a crossroads- a good place to have a theatre. You confront many different kinds of people. So if we wanted to do Shakespeare properly we would have to reproduce the Globe AND Rennaisance England..We might be able to do both these things, that is we might be able to recreate the Globe but we CANT recreate the people.

What " being true to Shakespeare" really is.

Being true to Shakespeare is being true really to the tradition of the 2nd half of the 19th century. They play the closest epoch to Shakespeare- the closest remembered one= that is what passes for " being true to Shakespeare". Do you know the the exterior of Hamlet is alwgys playwed romantic= that is he is young, thin and a brunette..When Olivier made him a blonde he broke tradition. Imagine a fat and bald Hamlet. Scholars say Shakespeare wrote for concrete actors and the one for whom Hamlet was written was fat and bald. So being true to Shakespea: is being true to our " grandfathers" traditions.

CONVENTIONAL LITERARY THEATRE: This is a place where they play dramatic works. The DRAMATIC WORK is more important than the THEATRE. The theatre only helps underline the drama.....Early in the 19th century no " spine " tied the theatre together. The Duke of Sax Meininghem began to brehk the tradition prevelant at his time (theatrical effects, tricks, mellowdrama) by integrating all the elements in relation to the text---he brought order to the theatre....The literary theatre is the seeds of the autonomous theatre.

CRAIG (Symbolic)---Stanislawski (Literary)

Although Stanislawski wanted to be " true to the author" it was paradoxical that he really wasnt--he was rather autonomou:

GREAT EPOCHS IN THE THEATRE WERE NEVER FAITHFUL TO THE AUTHORS

In many theatres writers wrote scenarios.

Shakespeare considered himself a writter of poems and sonnets. The theatre work wasnt that important to him. His ambitions as a poet were fulfilled. He presented scenarios..He too old plays and re-wrote them--probably helped by the acting ensemble. One had to write a play a week..Everyone said that

the order of scenes were set and then each one went home to write a scne or two. This causes scholars problems. How many other pens are in Shakespeare?

All Elizabethan, the great ones served the THEATRE and not LITERATURE....It was only later they were considered literary giants.

I feel if Shakespeare would have seen Grotowskis HAMLET he would understand. God knows he did this with others works...Grotowskis elaborated Hamlet brought more protests from todays audiences than it would have from Shakespeare himself. Shakespeare was used to this.

Many great epochs were without dramatic literature: Commedia Del Art

Oriental Drama...The text is not important here--they have scenarios with words, that is all.

We are caught in the vortex of " fidelity"...We are caught becaus we are looking through the traditions of the literary theater. So we feel theatre is a place where one plays drama- dramatic literature. But in the great epochs it was different. THEATRE WAS THEATRE AND NOT DRAMATIC LITERATURE! We are too tied to the historic image of literary theatre.

What we do in the Lab theatre is not exceptional. It is not " a bastards" in theatre history for it is natural in theatre history! Even conventional theatres do it- those who claim they are true to the author. But we do it more intensely and more consciously. It is only a matter of degree.

Those who complained that we were not true to the author when we did THE CONSTANT PRINCE follow the romantic approach to the play.

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ON MOVEMENT:

When a man wants something- he speaks.
When that doesnt get him what he wants- he sings.
When that doesnt work- he adds a choir behind him.
When all this doesnt help, he begins to move his hands and feet----he dances!