

The British Grotowski Conference

‘Jerzy Grotowski: Theatre and Beyond’

University of Kent 11-14 June 2009

Jerzy Grotowski died in 1999, a marker of the end of a century of director-led investigations of the theatre. With Grotowski’s passing, we lost one of the iconographic figures of 1960s and 70s countercultural experiments, and guiding inspiration of what theatre can do and be, and how we might go beyond it. 10 years on, we will ask if 21st century theatre and performance are the poorer without his ‘poor theatre’. What remains of Grotowski’s work today, in Britain especially, and in the English language in particular? How can we work beyond the practices, texts, documents and ideas he has left behind?

This conference in the UNESCO-designated ‘Year of Grotowski’ will celebrate Grotowski’s enduring influence by bringing together key people to ask what riches he has left behind. It will assess his impact on British theatre especially, and invite international scholars and artists to reassess Grotowski today, 50 years after he and Ludwik Flaszen took over the tiny Theatre of 13 Rows in Opole, that later transformed into the world-renowned Laboratory Theatre.

The British Grotowski Conference will

- consider how British theatre practice, thinking and teaching has been inspired by Grotowski and his many collaborators, since the first contact with the Royal Shakespeare Company and Peter Brook in 1966
- examine how his work has shaped British physical theatre and actor training since
- present new materials, ideas and practices to the UK by bringing together international Grotowski scholars and artists and their works, including from the Grotowski Institute, Poland, and, we hope, the Workcenter of Jerzy Grotowski and Thomas Richards, Italy
- introduce from the UK those who worked with Grotowski, his actors and peers, as well as those who have been deeply influenced by his work
- discuss and analyse Grotowski’s ongoing importance in a multi-modal combination of roundtables, performances, exhibitions, screenings and papers.

Confirmed participants/speakers include:

Jola Cynkutis, Marco De Marinis, Murray Edmond, Ludwik Flaszen, Jill Godmilow, Richard Gough, Jaroslaw Fret, Jill Godmilow, Mietek Janowski, Adela Karsznia-Karpowicz, Leszek Kolankiewicz, Jennifer Kumiega, Virginie Magnat, Ferruccio Marotti, Ian Morgan, Rena Mirecka, Mike Pearson, Zbigniew Osinski, Franco Ruffini, Mirella Schino, Boleslaw Taborski, Fernando Taviani, Luisa Tinti, Khaled Tyabji, and Grzegorz Ziolkowski.

We are delighted to have attending the conference these former members of the Teatr Laboratorium: Ludwik Flaszen, Maja Komorowska, Rena Mirecka, Mieczyslaw Janowski, Zygmunt Molik, Stefania Gardecka.

EXHIBITION

This exhibition aims to recall the spirit which animated the performances of Jerzy Grotowski's company from its beginning in the 1950s until the 1980s, covering the period of its productions and its subsequent development during the 'Paratheatre' phase (in the 1970s) and beyond, including a focus on the 'Theatre of Sources' and connections with Indian culture.

This will be the largest most comprehensive collection of material ever shown in public. It builds on an exhibition organized by Wrocław's Grotowski Institute and presented at the Polish Cultural Institute in Rome in 2006, by also including a reconstruction of the set of *The Constant Prince*, costumes and props from different productions, with a special emphasis on *The Constant Prince*, including further rare pieces such as colour pictures of that performance and photos from the last performance *Apocalypsis cum figuris*, as well as scenes from the lives of the laboratory members. It will also include a complete collection of original posters and leaflets from the post-theatrical phase. A special section, commissioned for this exhibition, will present new pictures by photographer Francesco Galli of the places and the protagonists of the Theatre of Sources. Screenings will show films, video and documentaries on or connected to Grotowski's work.

