

ARS POETICA

Only when it speaks about the most vital and essential issues does the art of theatre stir the audience. I want all my performances to shake the spectators' indifference towards society by ridiculing all that outrages us and affirming openheartedly all that seems true and honest. However, being truthful is a great art. Sincerity can only be achieved by means of elaborate techniques. Each performance, each attempt at «giving expression to thought» is therefore for us strongly connected with a quest for new aesthetics. I believe that the metaphoric stage language should reflect the compression of events in modern life. My theatre tends towards poetry with its concentration of images and unheeded flight of imagination, its daring juxtaposition of past and present, the historic and the intimate. Boris Pasternak called metaphors the «cursive of the spirit», a sudden and immediate illumination. We are also on the look-out for the most striking metaphors to express our thoughts and feelings, and we count on the creative cooperation of the audience. Artistic individuality is not a whimsical desire to be original at all costs but a vital necessity. Romain Rolland was right when he warned the artist: «If you have nothing to say, stay silent!» But how can an inarticulate person speak? In art, confused articulation can make a parody of ideas instead of expressing them, just as a literal transposition of a real event onto stage can turn out to be a fake. When Coquelin really fell asleep on stage the critics wrote that he failed to snore realistically. The truth of the theatre is in make-believe: «Imagined lines will make me weep...» (Pushkin). Art speaks the language of images, and instead of making an accurate copy of life, similar to a posthumous cast, we try to reveal its concentrated essence, its most expressive facets. Theatre is not for the blind, it is an art meant for both the ear and the eye. Besides interpreting the meaning of a play, I am fascinated by the possibility of giving it a purely theatrical, visual interpretation. A thought can be expressed both linguistically and physically. Theatre is a synthesis of literature, art, sculpture, music, stage lights... Just as different notions are united in poetry by rhyme, we find light and word, rhythm and movement united on stage. And this language of stage composition can be very revealing. A combination of carbon and saltpeter is known to produce gunpowder. I also aim at explosive combinations of scenic elements, hoping that their sudden interaction will illuminate everything in width and depth throwing a bright light on the inner life of man. It seems to me that it is easier to find new solutions at the junction of genres. The creative process is, as Mayakovsky once put it, «a ride into the unknown», a discovery. Objects, events and people when placed before the footlights cast off their musty appearances, and surprise us by their novelty. By dismissing the habitual, art aims at the essential. Form is the most expressive way of telling the truth, it is the quintessence of an idea brought to its extreme, capable of breaking through the armour of indifference. Perhaps another reason why I feel so alienated from the so-called common forms of theatre is that I don't accept the calm and contemplative attitude towards life. One should not give in to circumstances, and give up his life principles for the standards often dictated by society. In spite of all difficulties one ought to believe firmly in his destination. Only this can give satisfaction in life and fill it with meaning. I would like to spend my remaining years fulfilling this destination. I don't distinguish between the greatness of ideas and the greatness of skill, the depth of meaning and the depth of form. I repeat — it is only by knowing WHAT to say and HOW to say it that the artist acquires the right to attention. YURI LYUBIMOV