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**TABLECLOTH  
DEFINITION OF  
PERFORMANCE**

**UPPER PERFORMANCE**

**[Without happy end. Introduction]**

The Polish edition of the translation of Schechner's book *Performance Studies: An Introduction*<sup>1</sup> became an opportunity to form an interesting theatre programme. The idea came from the translator, Tomasz Kubikowski, who, having performed a query of Polish performative terminology, proposed its ordering and unification. In the multiple consultations of his translation proposals with the author, he adopted two main solutions: for *performance* he found a Polish 'perfomans', and when translating *performance studies* – he created a new term: 'performatyka' [*translator's comment: may be translated as 'performat-ics'*]. As far as the first decision was of a pure ordering nature and resulted simply from rejecting alternative suggestions ('widowisko', 'przedstawienie', 'dramat', 'performens'), the latter included assigning to quite uncontrolled searches of *performance studies* a scientific cut, by giving it a name whose sound of 'performatics' would refer to 'serious' scientific fields, e.g. 'systematics' or 'semiotics'. The new name which (it has to be emphasized) was fully approved by Schechner, was to bring a new style of reflection, more disciplined, to performative studies. This way, the book appeared in Poland entitled *Performatyka. Wstęp*<sup>2</sup> [*translator's comment: 'Performatics. Introduction'*].

In Schechner's opinion 'performances are actions'; the author emphasized at the same time that '*the subject*' of performance studies is '*behaviour*'. 'Performans' defined in such a way appeared to be very handy. Polish language previously lacked 'a transparent description tool' – which *performance* is in English – that, thanks to its capacity and openness, would allow free development, putting footbridges over various fields. Some researchers, mainly researchers of theatre studies (that I am one of) saw advantages of the "transparent" term 'performans', which always may be made more precise in the language relevant for a given field. While researchers of performance from liminal and subversive line of *performance studies* radically extended the area for performative studies, in Poland, on the contrary, they got involved in redefinition of performance and determination of functional, historical and cultural borders of its application. The situation of Polish *performatics* is shown in the words of Małgorzata Sugiera, who proposed, *to be in fact as baron Münchhausen, who with his own power and with his own hands [...] dragged himself out of marsh pulling his hair*<sup>3</sup>. What has left from the theatre program of taming *performance studies*?

### [The made table]

Mosze Isserles, who critically referred to Halal Code *Table made* (*Shulchan Aruch*) by Joseph Karo from Toledo, titled his extensive comment to the work by his predecessor *Tablecloth* (*ha-Mappa*), as without the tablecloth the table will not be made! Not always the circumstances allow one to use one's reflex as it worked for the Cracow Rabbi. And although because of that *ha-Mappa* seems to be an exceptional example, almost matchless, thanks to its beauty and lightness, it confirms the rule: in the traditional discussion – not only discussion among Rabbis – usually you see your predecessors, and, despite some faults, you respect them.

Jacek Wachowski gave his book, that was to be (as the author was convinced) a Copernicus breakthrough in placing the theatre among shows, the title *Performans*<sup>4</sup> – identical with the title of the work by Marvin Carlson. At least this is what we could think when we compare works published by Wachowski with the Polish translation of the work by the American pioneer<sup>5</sup>. The situation looks quite different is when we reach back to the first edition, in which the title of Carlson's book is: *Performance: A critical introduction*<sup>6</sup>. Wachowski removed the ending of the predecessor's title *a critical introduction* and used the remaining part, namely *Performance*, in his work. However, he did not preserve the original spelling, but used the Polish version 'performans'. In this way the brilliant removal became invisible for the Polish reader and only the Polish reader could have appreciated the gesture of the author. In English the idea of removal would not be understandable at all, as *performance* is a very often used word and used in many meanings. Therefore, Carlson was forced to specify the title of his book: *Performance: A critical introduction*. If translated into English, the editor of Wachowski's book would require an extended title. Due to this minor lack of precision (as it might seem), instead of satisfaction with the title (which would have been equally elegant to Isserles's concept of *Tablecloth*), the reader shares the nasty feeling that Wachowski succumbed to an affliction common for quite a remarkable part of modern authors, described by Harold Bloom as '*fear of influence*'<sup>7</sup>.

In *performance studies* – in Schechner's opinion – the main issue in the style of research he represents is to capture the author's intentions, which remain in close relation with the cultural identity of the author. Therefore, not accidentally, in his book he 'gives his voice' to abundantly quoted researchers, placing their 'issues' in graphically separated 'windows' (he even joked that if he registered his 'patent' then today he could charge licence fees from Windows). What he

meant is that words of others sounded with the largest possible independence, almost as in Plato's dialogues. Schechner clearly tries not to deprive his 'opponents' of characteristic attributes and not to cut their texts to his theses. It may be seen in this practice he tries not to deprive his 'opponents' of characteristic attributes and to cut their texts to his own Jewish culture he boasts about. In the traditional comments of Talmud the said judgements are not treated as anonymous but linked to specific characters; e.g., this sentence was said by rabbi who happened to walk with his head in the clouds, and the other issue is assigned to a rabbi with an inclination to passionate obstinacy. However, in the post-enlightenment study of the West statements scholars used to be treated as if they had no emotions. Only such discoveries as the private notes of Bronisław Malinowski bring up the question about the secret theory of science. For Schechner the circumstances – hidden and ousted from the official flow of the Western science – have to be open in *performance studies*, thanks to which a reader may independently make his opinion about the reliability of the researcher.

For Wachowski the key term is 'the spectacle'. This word for years has raised controversies in Poland, if it is treated in a superior way. It was proven during the dispute between Leszek Kolankiewicz (a defender of 'cultural spectacle') and Kubikowski (a propagator of 'performance') in the 'Dialogue' in 2003. Summing up this discussion Sugiera reminded that Zbigniew Raszewski defined 'spectacle' as a pursue of the performer to invoke awe, and such attitude makes it impossible to put 'a spectacle' in the field of natural values<sup>8</sup>. 'Natural law' regulating the life of individuals and communities in the European tradition, was not so long ago an undisputable rule in all ideological battles. Leszek Kołakowski, observing the progressing erosion of our civilization, concluded that 'natural law' is not an objective necessity, but a result of previous choices of the predecessors:

*If nature does not create differentiation between the good and the evil, the just and the unjust, natural law may only be divine law [...]. Countries that do not want to define themselves morally through Christian tradition (in the civilization that came out of this tradition), in reality announced that they are totally free in defining what is just or unjust; that each law is good, from the moment it is effective<sup>9</sup>.*

From this perspective, is the choice of 'a spectacle', as the central term in the studies, neutral, or relates to a specific vision of a human being? Another decision by Wachowski when he differentiates 'artificial spectacles' and 'natural spectacles', seems to justify this question. The term 'artificial spectacles' clearly indicates that they should be considered in mimetic categories (namely connected with the creator); and mimesis traditionally opposes iconicity (namely the sphere of recipients)<sup>10</sup>. The term 'natural spectacles' would therefore suggest that Wachowski's nature has the role of the creator. 'It is difficult to suspect the researcher of naive animism, so the reason must be deeper. Let's notice that the term 'cultural spectacle' by Kolankiewicz – not limiting the possibility to study phenomena connected with, e.g., gardening or landscape design – does not raise similar doubts; each spectacle is a cultural fact. On the other hand, 'artificial spectacles' are divided by Wachowski into 'performances' and 'installations'. He pays more attention to the latter category, splitting 'installation' into 'environment' and 'assemblage'. Then, he identifies 'sculpture' within 'environment' and within 'assemblage' – 'painting' and 'collage'. In that system of spectacles 'theatre' is in the subordinate place among 'performances', which is clearly emphasized by Wachowski:

*Talking about the fact that theatre is one of performances, and therefore, one of spectacles, what we have in mind is that it is doubly subordinate: first, it belongs to a set of performances and is subject to all their rules, and then, as one of performances, belongs to artificial spectacles.*

*Therefore, there are no reasons to think that it is a being in any way dominant over spectacles. [...] The fact that theatre is more popular than other performances (or spectacles), does not mean that its situation changes. Such conviction would be getting back to thinking that the Sun with other planets are going around the Earth<sup>11</sup>.*

The 'revolution' by Wachowski appears to be much more radical than anticipated by the author. The model of systematics of spectacles he created is much closer to the structure of the comedy *Candelaio* by Giordano Bruno<sup>12</sup> than the heliocentric theory of the Solar System by Nicolaus Copernicus. The title candelabrum from the comedy by Bruno is equivalent to the sky full of stars, and its mirror reflections reveal multiplicity of perspectives and multiple infinity; therefore, there are no heroes in art, no intrigue, linear actions or dramatic tension. It is an infinite world, no centre, no leader, subordinate to a pluralistic game, not to absolute knowledge. The cosmological vision of Bruno was confirmed (already after the philosopher's death) by observations of the sky through a telescope. In *Candelaio* (a comedy version of Bruno's scientific treaties, so adapted to the needs of a real spectator) all dispersed perspectives of scholars and jugglers share a strong desire for Vittoria's body. Thanks to *the victorious Vittoria's body* – comments Jean-Noël Vuarnet – *linguistic and social signs confront, the world order<sup>13</sup>*.

In the introduction to the book Wachowski reveals the source of his more contemporary inspiration – the installation *Memory Theatre*, realized by Gerhard Dirmoser celebrating 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the festival Ars Electronica (Linz 2004):

*The installation included several dozens of definitions, hundreds of names of artists and extensive literature of the subject. It referred to more than ninety thousand pages of catalogues published in the celebration of subsequent editions of Ars Electronica, as well as to publications not related with the festival, regarding artistic practice, aesthetics of social life,*

*philosophy, psychology and individual cognitive experiences (including also those using the body)*<sup>14</sup>.

Wachowski in *Performans* took from the 'monumental diagram' of the predecessor the impressive vastness of the topic and the structure based on the 'problem order'<sup>15</sup>. Dirmoser titled his installation the same as Giulio Camillo his *Teatr pamięci* [Theatre of memory] (is the doubled title *Performans* by Wachowski is a repetition of this gesture?). The mnemotechnical piece of art of the Renaissance philosopher was re-discovered by Ernst H. Gombrich, and popularized by Frances A. Yates<sup>16</sup>. Mnemotechnic is about remembering facts already selected and considered important, so often structures and places used for that purpose (e.g. palace of Simonides of Ceos) are treated instrumentally. While Bruno in his comedy reached for the candle holder, Camillo (putting knowledge of the world in order based on astrological and cabalistic works of art) used the building of an ancient theatre. He did it in a totally innovative way, so the other way around: a lonely spectator was put in place of the stage and the spectacle was organized on the seven steps of the auditorium. The former sectors of the theatre auditorium were used by him to group the collected elements in 'a problem order', with the same transparency as in the alleys of today's supermarkets. In *Theatre of Memory* Camillo did not plan any space for the audience that could assess the quality of his creation; the organizer of the show became, therefore, the only spectator of his own spectacle. The ancient theatre emptied from spectators was included by Camillo in the structure of *Theatre of Memory*. As a consequence, Dirmoser's diagram and – indirectly – Wachowski's book, owe its internal structure also to the ancient theatre. The most important elements of his vision were put by Camillo on the first step of the old auditorium because – as he explained – in ancient theatre the most notable people sat in the lowest rows. The philosopher used the real theatre building (or its three-dimensional imagination),



while in Dirmoser's diagram we recognize only the ground plan of the amphitheatre. In this way the third dimension disappeared also from the structure of the book *Performans*, and together with it – the hierarchical arrangement of elements. The space in which Wachowski defines performance and systematizes its various forms, with its amorphism may be associated with the Renaissance vision of Bruno but more resembles today's hypermarket.

It is a comparison appreciating the concept by Wachowski, because as Marek Krajewski writes in an important text from the 1990s:

*[supermarket] is a place where the main rules of the modern world order are expressed, it is a type of lens, in which they focus and become visible in a form of a model ownership of order dominating in countries of consumption saturation. In the Polish reality metaphor of a supermarket is enhanced [...], [as] it not only reflects certain aspects of philosophy, but also [...] symbolizes the very transformation or the system change [after 1989], whose purpose is to realize that order<sup>27</sup>.*

To better understand the innovative concept of Wachowski, let's move to the supermarket where goods are not clearly hierarchized by their value, degree of exclusivity, or the price but rather appear as a variety homogeneous in terms of meaning, categorized into areas<sup>28</sup>. Let's notice that the author of *Performans* follows the same principle of 'problem order'. In a supermarket time becomes abstract, as *from social time – shared by everyone, it becomes [...] a private category, defined by the individual structure of needs*. In the same process also spatial distances disappear, and *culture, understood as an axis around which identity is organized [...] of communities and their members, in a supermarket it is brought down to a role of an ornament<sup>29</sup>*. Wachowski with the same freedom travels in space, in the name of transparency omitting cultural contexts (e.g. Holy Mass in an empty church is not a performance for him, as there are no recipients whose presence defines performance in his opinion). In a supermarket the border

*between natural – original – and so called secondary needs*<sup>20</sup> becomes blurred, which could explain the ambiguous division of spectacles by Wachowski into ‘spectacles of nature’ and ‘artificial spectacles’ (based on the market areas ‘spring vegetables’ and ‘tools’).

In this attractive theoretical perspective, the social space ceased to be burdened with ‘taboo of social invisibility’, *borders between particular fields and areas of human life – they all, notwithstanding the degree of their existential importance and spiritual or physical nature, are being brought down to consumption needs*<sup>21</sup>. ‘Sharing the visible’, so a system of *tangible certainties* – notices Jacques Rancière – *establishes at the same time what is shared, and its separate parts*<sup>22</sup>, thanks to which the society can function in general. It was an important function of ‘visible sharing’ for traditional communities to open the social space to the language of transcendence, of which only the flavour *UFO Peaches* is left in the supermarket. ‘Supermarket philosophy’ not only cancels the existing divisions, but – what is more important – does not form any new proposals. Herbert Marcuse didn’t have anything to offer to students during the revolt in 1968 (excluding an introduction to the romantic land of martyrdom, a praise of perversion and pregenital sexuality<sup>23</sup>), but with a unique perspicacity assessed the cognitive situation of the ‘one-dimensional man’ formed in supermarkets: [...] *in the most developed areas of modern society transplantation of social needs into individual needs is so effective that the difference between the two seems purely theoretical*<sup>24</sup>. And a similar type of discipline in theoretical takes is presented by the author of *Performans*. Wachowski consequently blurs cognitive perspectives previously differentiable and multiplied by his predecessors. I already mentioned the removal of the third dimension in Camill’s vision and blurred borders between mimetics and iconic nature, let’s then focus on preliminary research of the author of *Performans*:

The development of reflection on performance was not done through accumulation of practices, differentiation of traditions and

thoughts, but first of all because they merged with each other on specific conditions, formed relations, crossed each other, and reciprocally influenced each other (for sure not by accident)<sup>25</sup>.

This is not about the researcher using his experiences, e.g., from artistic actions (that Schechner asserted) and, in consequence, about taking energy from the tension between the separated theory and practice, but their substituting with something like 'metapractice' of clearly post-Marxism roots. Wachowski seems to claim self-organizational skills of a spectacular universe, perceived similarly to a hypermarket. The author does not name this force directly, but clearly the thing here is about 'the invisible hand of the market'.

This part was quoted in his short text by the author of *Apologia Jacka Wachowskiego*<sup>26</sup>, who on the one hand with enthusiasm notices that *such systematic take* [of the researcher from Poznań] *will no doubt be easy to use in the humanities and will facilitate interdisciplinary studies*, and on the other hand (complaining about 'a strong 'mystagogical' element' in texts of older performaticians and anthropologists of culture who force their readers to follow them through meandering paths of initiation rituals) writes with conviction that many historians of the theatre will appreciate *a possibility to exit quite a narrow valley where they previously were*<sup>27</sup>. Already in the 1970s an architect Christopher Alexander was wondering *how to establish a university as a fair of higher education*<sup>28</sup>? This project (except for some elite universities) was realized overseas a long time ago, and in Poland has been known well for at least two decades, so 'hypermarket' is associated, especially to younger researchers, with a safe transatlantic.

### [Theatre]

In Wachowski's definition of performance we can read that: *performances are active acts, including the performer's actions with his body as the axis. Those actions must be watched by the audience. No audience, no*

*performance*<sup>29</sup>. That definition makes the impression of a very communicative synthesis of a coursebook definition of theatre<sup>30</sup>. The researcher as if wants to keep quiet about achievements of the predecessors, while Schechner in a similar situation, just the opposite, emphasized a strong influence of theatre experts on the shape of his *performance studies*. It is another example of amnesia of the author of *Performans*, because already before it happened he had forgotten to mention *Theatre of Memory* by Camill and ancient theatre as the primary sources of his inspiration. Amnesia is an extremely important instrument of the contemporary scientific reflection with reduction as the purpose. Wachowski does not write directly about a supermarket as a cognitive model (the authors of the reformation of higher education in Poland after 1989 showed a similar restraint), however, mentioning Jerzy Grotowski, refers to a circle of values of atomized consumers: *Grotowski himself, when he talked to American students on a Performer spelled with a capital letter, was – slightly speaking – not understood. This lack of understanding is of permanent nature as Grotowski is not put among creators of the performative breakthrough*<sup>31</sup>. Grotowski does not fit into the universe of a hypermarket, and therefore, could not have influenced the concept of Wachowski's performance, as the performative breakthrough *was done earlier and had other sources being wider processes, and not actions of particular authors undertaken individually*. Therefore, it seems that – as the author of *Performans* claims – correctness and sticking to the mainstream of *vanguard practices and philosophical-linguistic reflection* should be the main concern of the researcher<sup>32</sup>.

Wachowski tries to diminish the meaning of his theatrical inspirations, which provokes questions like: what is theatre if a theorist had to stand on its debris? Present theatre reflection was dominated by anthropological search for the sources of theatre and conviction that the further into the past we reach back, the more we will

get closer to the goal. Radicality of that vital reflection stream was shown among others by Marta Steiner<sup>33</sup> and Mirosław Kocur<sup>34</sup>. At the foundations of this ambitious attitude there is the idea of evolutionism connected mainly with Charles Darwin, whose eminent work of art was also a child of his era and entailed limitation. It is worth noticing that Darwin did not know books by George Mendel and, in fact, they contained the main answers that he himself ineffectively looked for. Has the theory of evolution been sufficiently studied since Darwin's times? Transposing biological ideas to culture, although inspiring, raises anxiety. It is all about the continuity, the number of genes (or their cultural equivalent – 'memes'<sup>35</sup>), may be irreversibly reduced or – on the contrary – enlarged with a suddenly occurring mutation. So, if the theatre – as it seems – emancipated itself from the social life as a result of subsequent cultural 'mutations', determining the moments when they appeared should be decisive, therefore, talking about the theatre before the occurrence of those key changes seems problematic. In the origin of theatre Kocur considers, for example, paintings in the Lascaux cave to be important, and results of the most recent studies show that they were created by *Homo neanderthalensis*, not by *Homo sapiens*. Although cave painting became a significant part of the world culture, it happened only in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Did not Gombrich show better understanding of the evolution idea than culture anthropologists? The art historian writes:

*A form of art exists everywhere in the world, but a story of art as continuous action does not start in the caves of Southern France, nor among North American Indians. There is no direct tradition, combining these peculiar beginnings with our days, but the continuity is alive, transferred from the master to the student and from the student to the enthusiast or copier<sup>36</sup>.*

The decisive role in the development of theatre – in my opinion – was played by two 'mutations': the invention of writing and democracy. Writing freed a man from the burden of maintaining the unchanged canon of knowledge in memory. Plato in *Phaedrus* talks

about writing as a pharmakon, stressing its side effects: [...] *that invention will sow amnesia in human souls because a man who learns that will stop training his memory; will trust writing and will recall everything from the outside.* Jacques Derrida specifies the intentions of the philosopher: [...] *writing is generally evil, external towards memory, it does not create knowledge, but conviction, does not reveal the truth, but guise*<sup>37</sup>. Performative mnemotechnical techniques when writing was invented became free from their main task – memorizing – and could be used in other ways. Such ambiguous creation connected with writing being born made the language of theatre become the language of probability, not the truth. Thanks to that from the very beginning theatre found itself in an incestuous relation with literature, which – now written down – since then seems to theatre as alien and coming from the outside; literature for theatre is now the Other.

The moment when a spoken word is replaced with a written word was restructured (although that was not their goal) by Martin Buber and Franz Rosenzweig in the German translation of the Bible; their purpose was to *create a text in which you could hear the voice of the Hebrew original, whereas the Bible was to remain a spoken word, said to the listener here and now*<sup>38</sup>. The word of the Bible, the word of liturgy does not comment on reality, it creates it. The translation of the Bible by Buber and Rosenzweig was subject to the ‘principle of colometry’ which includes obtaining compliance of the units of sense and breathing, and the ‘principle of the leading word’, taken directly from mnemotechnic methods. The experiment shows how far the process of memorizing the sacred text required physical and kinetic engagement of ‘sons witnesses’, introduced by Buber to the drama *Elias*:

*ONE OF THE SONS WITNESSES* going a step further: *Every one of us knows by heart all war songs that Micah collected. In each of us there is a manuscript, ready to be read. Each of the songs saved in our hearts is a call for fight*<sup>39</sup>.

Performers (similar to Buber's 'Sons Witnesses') thanks to writing that freed them from the obligation to be 'a live book' of tradition, they could use their skills in ongoing commenting on reality which is the main function of theatre. Was that 'mutation' in the cultural genome (related with invention of writing) sufficient for theatre to be created? In my opinion there had to be another 'mutation': democracy being born.

Democracy in Athens created new institutions of power where the collective voice of city inhabitants could sound. It was expressed in the architecture of bouleuterions (namely place for politic discussions and meetings) which were shaped in such a manner that every participant of the meeting, before taking their individual decision, could hear and see as much as the others. The epistemological category of 'bystandership' is founded on such 'theatrical' experience. Voting, with the final decision taken by the majority, was performed by putting a white or a black stone to a ballot box. Theatre plays were presented in the Theatre of Dionysius built according to a similar plan as bouleuterions, thanks to which all spectators could see and hear the same. In this way, mnemotechnical performances (freed by the invention of writing from liturgical functions) found a new place for themselves and at the same time a new applications in the space of democratic society – commenting on current events. Therefore, the question about the social function of theatre is at the same time a question for trustworthiness of democracy.

Evidence of the usefulness of democratic election was delivered by its fierce opponent – Sir Francis Galton<sup>49</sup>. The example may only by appearance seem trivial, but it provides the first mathematical proof in history. The researcher participating in a farming trade fair in Plymouth drew attention to the contest of weight of oxen waiting for slaughter. The contest could be participated by anyone for a fee of six pence; and the guess of the weight most approximate to the

actual weight of the animal got a prize. Galton was convinced that the average of all eight hundred individual guesses will significantly deviate from the correct result. It turned out to be totally the opposite: the average of collective judgements appeared to be more precise than the individual assessments. The researcher pointed out the advantageous conditions for voting: the annual nature of the event and therefore the gathering of competent participants, the entrance fee which discouraged jokes, hope for a prize, joy of competition and no agitation that could falsify the result. Based on the obtained data Galton raised a thesis that assessment of a phenomenon done by a group of people may be more precise than anticipations of one person. Galton's thesis on effectiveness of the so called 'group wisdom' was confirmed by contemporary studies<sup>41</sup>.

Galton compared the participants of the slaughter contest to voters in parliamentary election, and let us refer their competences to theatre audience. First, we need to define differences between the three cases as they are significant in perceiving theatre among other performances. In the Plymouth context the 'collective wisdom' occurred only in Galton's statistical studies, as the organizers did not have such a purpose. There are many performances in which the community of spectators are not allowed to have an opinion. Wachowski, for example, dedicated a lot of space to making actions of a performer subject to effectiveness. What kind of effectiveness are we talking about if someone – as in democracy – resigning from manipulation (encouraged by, for example, Plato in *The Republic*), allows opposing voices? In the famers' voting in Plymouth and in parliamentary elections ballot boxes were used to cast votes with a precisely defined answer, that allows for their statistical interpretation. Attempts to apply mathematical methods in theatre have always failed. The ambiguity of statistical results does not mean that reaction of the theatre audience cannot be captured – on the contrary, it is possible, but requires



a totally different language; it is a language of the people-to-people relations. Among various concepts of philosophy of dialogue – in the preliminary consideration of the problem – Buber’s division into the relations ‘I – It’ and ‘I – Thou’ seems the most useful. The first relation is of extremely objectifying nature, the latter – subjectifying: *When I stand in front of a human as my Thou – notices Buber – when I tell him the basic word I – Thou, he is not an object among other objects and is not composed of objects*<sup>42</sup>. A Partner perceived in this way is respected and is not thrust upon with your opinion. Theatre’s differentiating attribute among other performances is blending the relation ‘I – Thou’ in the spatial structure of the theatre building:

*The relation here is hidden [...], but it reveals itself, silently, but linguistically creatively. We do not hear any Thou, but despite that we feel asked and we reply – by creating, thinking, acting: we speak out the essence of the basic word, although with our lips we cannot say Thou*<sup>43</sup>.

Although in the European tradition there developed models of the theatre which show significant architectural differences towards the ancient theatre, its basic rule ‘every spectator sees and hears the same’ in the new variants remained. In such organized space – often against political circumstances – the collective wisdom of the audience can appear, even if in the form of silence.

### **[Performance]**

I already pointed years ago to the need for separate treatment of *performance art*, suggesting that *the discipline in Polish terminology – which would include simultaneous booking of the Polish translation ‘peformans’ only for theoretical studies and reserving performance (spelled originally) for performance art – maybe would allow avoiding some misunderstandings and tensions*<sup>44</sup>. I then argued that *for at least a decade Polish performers have used the work performance as spelled in English, resigning from any previous Polish translations*<sup>45</sup>. I will be faithful to my proposed terminology.

It has become almost a tradition that researchers in their attempts to systematize fields of reflection over performance usually refer to specific parameters, e.g., for Erika Fischer-Lichte it would be Marina Abramović, for Kocur – Grotowski, for Wachowski – the above-mentioned Dirmoser. I choose Dinocrates to be my patron, whose *performance* was described in detail by Vitruvius<sup>46</sup>. The intention of the author of *O architekturze ksiąg dziesięć* [*De Architectura*] was to create a compendium of knowledge on the profession of an architect which requires *proficiency in all fields*<sup>47</sup>. All artistic professions now have interdisciplinary nature. Vitruvius presents concrete design and execution solutions. He writes also about how to attract investors and how to get orders. He illustrates all that with the story of Dinocrates. A young architect, seeking achievements in his profession, left for Macedonia and tried to meet Alexander the Great there, but credentials and help from acquaintances were not effective. Then he dressed up as Hercules and in such an outfit appeared in the basilica, the public space where trade was held, but also judgements were passed. His *performance* caught attention of the ruler passing by, thanks to which Dinocrates could present his architectural vision: *I made a design for the shaping of Mount Athos into a statue of a man, in whose left hand I represented a very spacious fortified city, and in his right hand a bowl to receive the water of all the streams which are in that mountain, so that it may pour from the bowl into the sea*<sup>48</sup>. Alexander got interest with that bold design, but he pointed out to the architect that when selecting the place, he did not take into account the provisioning needs of the city; the food for the inhabitants would have to be delivered by the sea. The Artist, deciding on the Athos mountain, had to be aware of the faults of that proposal, as at the same time he showed his intuition when selecting the place for his *performance*. If he had showed up in his Hercules outfit, e.g., at the entrance to a theatre, he might have been taken for an actor, or even an attacker (Alexander's father was assassinated in

a theatre). In the end Dinocrates' action appeared to be successful, as the ruler ordered him to build Alexandria.

Let's notice that the *performance* of the architect included not only wearing Hercules' outfit, but also a specially prepared architectural design, bold and provocative, therefore underdeveloped and not very realistic. If Dinocrates – having gained acknowledgement of the investor – neglecting the duties of an architect, still wanted to shake his lion's mane and wave the club, he would probably lose his order. Therefore, there is a clear line between an attention-attracting show-off and actual execution of the profession. Promotional actions, requiring immediate effect, are played in a space deprived of human interactions; artistic message here has to be simple and clear. Such attributes, useful in a street between stalls, would not bring much to Dinocrates in a complicated investment process. On the one hand, we have a one-dimensional world, almost reduced to 'I – It', and, on the other hand, such a complicated reality that Buber's 'I – Thou' seems to be just an approximation of the richness of human relations which were perhaps the most subtly described by Emmanuel Lévinas.

The same space between stalls, entered years ago by Dinocrates in a lion's skin, became a challenge for American artists of *performance art* in the middle of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. At the same time in Poland similar artistic actions were associated with theatre (many ventures of a nature of a typical *performance art* were called in this way, e.g., Teatr Sensybilistyczny. The attachment to theatre was a result of a different situation of Polish artists – while performers overseas had to act on their own – in communist Poland one could find institutional support, that mainly in a theatre. It was proven by, for example, the achievements of Józef Szajna or Tadeusz Kantor. When in the West *performance art* artists detached themselves from tradition and literature, in Poland the tradition of painters-dramatists was continued: Cyprian Norwid, Stanisław Wyspiański and Stanisław Witkacy.

To what extent are these trends still present in the activities of the contemporary Polish artists of *performance art*?

Being active in the free-market reality (atomized and objectivized) puts the artist in the situation of Dinocrates, as if there was no institutional support. He needs to fight for his position then. And he himself has to explain the sense of his actions. It is very interesting that Vitruvius, talking to Julius Caesar, presents the *performance* of handsome Dinocrates as equal to his theoretical piece of art:

*To me, however, the Emperor, nature did not give such an impressive posture, age disfigured my face, sickness eroded strengths. Therefore, deprived of those attributes, with the use of my knowledge and my writing, as I expect, I will gain your grace*<sup>49</sup>.

Carlson's question *what type of performance is writing about performance*<sup>50</sup> was not, therefore, new. After the concept shift, the role of a contemporary artist's commentaries grew. The artist tries to fight for free space for *performance art* with his own theory.

For Vitruvius, Dinocrates' *performance* and his own theoretical treaty were not final pieces, on the contrary, contributing to self-promotion, prepared the ground for undertaking actual architectural tasks. It happens that an advertising *performance* is able to become independent, as it happened in the case of the 'parade'. In the beginning it was a street performance of actors who encouraged potential audience with their dirty tricks to see their theatre performance. In the French folk and country theatre of the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries the 'parade' became a separate type of show. Even when the 'parade' was played in front of a sophisticated audience – the premiere of *Recueil de Parades* by Jan Potocki took place in the court theatre in Łańcut – it preserved its language of provocation and parody taken over from the street. The place where *performance art* was born – in the space of free-market competition fight – imposes a provocative style of communication and, at the same time, established the criteria of the

genre. *Performance* focused only on getting applause became for Jon McKenzie the starting point in the 'liminal norm' he formulated, which means a full dependence of a contemporary performer on the rules of the free market. In today's world, where mainstream economy started to set a significant tone in the global civilization discourse (which, in the opinion of McKenzie, happened after the end of the Cold War), therefore, everyone is a performer. In the published by him *Performuj, albo... Od dyscypliny do performansu* [*Perform or Else: From Discipline to Performance*]<sup>51</sup> McKenzie describes a spectacular catastrophe which ends not only with a destruction of a space shuttle, but a destruction of the text of his book. The architecture of the text shows inevitable collapse of civilization whose foundations were assumed to be in *performance*.

### **[No happy end. Ending]**

In the evolution of performativity, from the very beginning the key role is played by two performances: *performance art* and theatre, therefore, I attempted to define their potential; for *performance art* I even booked a separate term: *performance*. Let me conclude with a citation from the second edition of Carlson's *Performans*:

*Together with a triumphant march of performance through the discourse on studies of society, culture, organization and technology, the theatre performance [...] moves more and more to the background in the occurring view of the world. I, however, want to close this book [...] with a defence of the importance and unique nature of theatre performance*<sup>52</sup>.

- 1 The book was published at the same time in the USA, Canada and England in 2002.
- 2 R. Schechner, *Performatyka. Wstęp*, transl. T. Kubikowski, Wrocław 2006.
- 3 M. Sugiera, *Być jak baron Münchhausen, czyli performatywność i performatyka*, 'Dialog' 2012, no. 5, pp. 76–89.
- 4 J. Wachowski, *Performans*, Gdańsk 2011.
- 5 M. Carlson, *Performans*, transl. E. Kubikowska, ed. Nauk. T. Kubikowski, Warsaw 2007.
- 6 M. Carlson, *Performance: a critical introduction*, New York 1996.
- 7 H. Bloom, *Lęk przed wpływem: teoria poezji*, transl. A. Bielik-Robson, M. Szuster, Cracow 2002.
- 8 M. Sugiera, *Być jak baron Münchhausen, czyli performatywność i performatyka*, ibid; Z. Raszewski, *Teatr w świecie widowisk. Dziewięćdziesiąt jeden listów o naturze teatru*, Warsaw 1991, p. 203.
- 9 L. Kołakowski, *Jezus ośmieszony. Esej apologetyczny i sceptyczny*, Cracow 2014, pp. 50–51.
- 10 Z. Mitosek, *Słowo ikoniczne?*, [in:] ibid, *Mimesis*, Warsaw 1997, p. 52.
- 11 J. Wachowski, *Performans*, ibid, p. 316.
- 12 G. Bruno, *Candelaio*, [in:] ibid, *Opera italiane*, ed. E. Canone, v.1, Firenze 1999.
- 13 J.-N. Vuarnet, *Filozof-artysta*, transl. K. Matuszewski, Gdańsk 2000, p. 38.
- 14 J. Wachowski, *Performans*, ibid, p. 5.
- 15 Ibid.
- 16 F.A. Yates, *Sztuka pamięci*, transl. W. Radwański, afterword L. Szczucki, Warsaw 1977.
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- 18 Ibid, p. 397.
- 19 Ibid, pp. 402–403.
- 20 Ibid, p. 404.
- 21 Ibid, p. 405.
- 22 J. Rancière, *Dzielenie postrzegalnego. Estetyka i polityka*, transl. M. Kropiwnicki, J. Sowa, introduction M. Pustoła, Cracow 2007, p. 69.
- 23 E. Fromm, *Rewizja psychoanalizy*, transl. R. Saciuk, Warsaw-Wrocław 1998, p. 120.
- 24 H. Marcuse, *Człowiek jednowymiarowy. Badania nad ideologią rozwiniętego społeczeństwa przemysłowego*, transl. W. Gromczyński, Warsaw 1991, p. 26.
- 25 J. Wachowski, *Performans*, ibid, p. 5.
- 26 P. Kencki, *Apologia Jacka Wachowskiego*, 'Teatr' 2012, no. 1.
- 27 Ibid.
- 28 Ch. Alexander, *Język wzorców. Miasta – budynki – konstrukcja*, transl. A. Kaczanowska, K. Maliszewska, M. Trzebiatowska, Gdańsk 2008, pp. 236–239.
- 29 J. Wachowski, *Performans*, ibid, pp. 233–234.
- 30 See: Ch. Balme, *Wprowadzenie do nauki teatru*, transl. W. Dudzik, M. Leyko, Warsaw 2002, pp. 74–97.
- 31 J. Wachowski, 'Performans' w *szponach antropologa*, 'Teatr' 2012, no. 1.
- 32 Ibid.
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- 34 M. Kocur, *Źródła teatru*, Wrocław 2013.
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- teza Francisa Galtona jest współcześnie prawdziwa?*, 'Optimum: studia ekonomiczne', 2014, no. 4, pp. 21–31.
- 42** M. Buber, *Ja i Ty*, [in:] *ibid*, *Wybór pism filozoficznych*, transl. J. Doktor, Warsaw 1992, p. 43.
- 43** *Ibid*, p. 41.
- 44** Z.W. Solski, *Pogranicza liturgii i teatru*, [in:] *Tradycje monastyczne w Europie. Między liturgiką a performatyką II*, ed. E. Matei, Z.W. Solskiego, Opole 2016, p. 344.
- 45** *Ibid*, p. 343.
- 46** Witruwiusz, *O architekturze ksiąg dziesięć*, transl. K. Kumaniecki, Warsaw 1956, p. 25.
- 47** *Ibid*, p. 14.
- 48** *Ibid*, p. 25.
- 49** *Ibid*.
- 50** M. Carlson, *Performans*, op.cit., p. 294.
- 51** J. McKenzie, *Performuj, albo... Od dyscypliny do performansu*, transl. T. Kubikowski, Cracow 2011.
- 52** M. Carlson, *Performans*, op.cit., p. 306.

Zbigniew Władysław Solski

*Tablecloth. On definition of performance*

**From its very beginning the development of performatics was influenced by two kinds of performance activities: *performance art* and theatre. In Poland theatrologists became proponents of performatics. The translation of Schechner's book about *performance studies* was used to homogenise Polish performative vocabulary: the translator reached for the polonized word "performans" and created a new term: "performatyka". Thanks to Schechner's general definition – performances are actions, while the subject of performatics are behaviours – the concept of "performans" proved to be very useful because the Polish language lacks such "transparent tool of description". When in the U.S.A. the researchers dealing with *performance studies* radically broadened the area of performative activities, their representative in Poland, Jacek Wachowski, became involved in the process of limiting the notion of "performans" and theatre's influence on performatics. This article is devoted to his innovative proposal.**

KEYWORDS:

**PERFORMATICS, PERFORMANCE ART, THEATRE**



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