

nor one of torture. Higher on the platform, one more mini-stage with a table and a gold chalice upon it. The whole 'set' rather precisely recreates the ornament of the chartulary of 'Carmina Burana' preserved at the Benediktbeuern monastery in Bavaria (...)²⁰⁵

The latest piece, *Ifigenia w A.* [Iphigienia in A.] (2007), is characterised by a similar simplicity of space: "When we enter the hall, we can see steps made of cubes. On them, awaiting the actors lie drums. All events will take place in a changeable space marked with moveable platforms (...)"²⁰⁶

In March 2010, the company was granted resources to restore the entire deteriorating palace compound to its former glory. This much larger place will make it possible for Gardzienice to fully accomplish the tasks the company have been performing for several years. For the theatre is not only an institution presenting spectacles, but also a very important cultural centre which plays the role of "theatre academy", as well as an educational and research facility. According to plans, the original 17th-century architectural arrangement of the whole compound is to be restored; a number of palace rooms shall be designated for a museum, while musical concerts shall be held in the ballroom. A new theatrical hall opening outside is planned in the 19th-century granary.²⁰⁷ In the meantime, a completely new theatrical place has attracted Staniewski's attention. On the one hand, it stands in contradiction to his initial decision to look for "natural theatrical environment"; on the other, however, it is to a certain degree "undomesticated" urban space, i.e., the district of Praga in Warsaw.

Although "Gardzienice" is the oldest and most famous theatre-centre to operate outside of town, it is by no means the only one. Of a number of similar places, the following deserve particular attention: Waław So-baszek's Teatr Węgały from the village of the same name situated near Olsztyn, Klinika Lalek (Theatre Klinika Lalek) from Wolimierz, or Luba Zarębińska's Stacja Szamocin from a small town of Szamocin near Piła²⁰⁸. In each of these cases the place was important as a cultural context and it is

205 Janusz Majcherek: "Jak w zwierciadle" [Mirror-Like], *Teatr*, 1991, no. 12.

206 Grzegorz Kondrasiuk: "Pożegnanie z esejem" [A Farewell to Essay], *Scena*, 2007, no. 12.

207 See: Grzegorz Józefczuk: "Gardzienice. Wielki remont w teatrze Staniewskiego" [Gardzienice. Great Refurbishment in Staniewski's Theatre], *Gazeta Wyborcza*, Lublin, 2 March 2010.

208 Other significant places include the White Synagogue in Sejny, location to Teatr Sejneński run by Małgorzata Szroeder of the Pogranicze Foundation, Teatr Wierszalin from Supraśl, Teatr Cinema from Michałowice.

the latter that, to great extent, created the meaning of the theatre. The place was to create a context for the meeting of the spectators and actors outside the conventions of a theatre work reception.

Although Teatr Wiejski Węgajty was founded in 1986, the farm had been used as a place for artistic meetings since 1982. As Waław Sobaszek admitted in an interview with the author, the choice of the place – far removed not only from towns, but even from the village of Węgajty – was in a way an escape from the Polish martial law reality of the 1980s.²⁰⁹ An isolated place of a solitary homestead was an island of “separate reality”: social and cultural (and, to a certain degree, political). At the same time, the theatre, whose seat is a former farmhouse, did not dissociate itself from its immediate surroundings (also cultural). Poland’s north-eastern territories are yet another former “borderland” – this time Polish-German – of very complex and varied history and culture. Tadeusz Burzyński explained: “What does ‘rural theatre’ mean? The way Sobaszek and his company see it, it is one that is based in the country not only in conceptual, but also in real terms; it is rooted in the countryside, in the season-based rhythm of life, in the sources of tradition, mythical memory and custom.”²¹⁰ Here again, a concrete place with its displaced multiculturalism constitutes an appropriate context for theatrical quest. Also Węgajty’s performances referred to cultural contexts, i.e., to multi-ethnic, and hence, multi-cultural reality: *Historie Vincenza o prawdziwym Żydzie, Antychryście i Preoswieszczeniym Metropolicie* [Vincenz’s Stories of a True Jew, Antichrist, and the Enlightened Metropolitane] (1988) according to Stanisław Vincenz, *Gospoda ku Wiecznemu Pokojowi* [The Inn Towards Eternal Peace] (1992) according to *Dolina Issy* [The Valley of Issa] by Czesław Miłosz, or contemporary pieces staged by one of the company’s two branches – *Projekt Terenowy* [The Fieldwork Project]: *Upiorny całun* [The Ghastly Shroud] according to *Dziady* [The Forefathers’ Eve] by Adam Mickiewicz (2001), and *Synczyzna* [Sonland] (2004) according to *Ślub* [The Marriage] and *Trans-Atlantyka* [Trans-Atlantic] by Witold Gombrowicz, to name just a few. In the spectacles, however, cultural traditions not only find affirmation, but are also subjected to critical analysis.

209 Author’s interview with Waław Sobaszek, 19 June 2009.

210 <http://free.art.pl/teajty/pliki/tresc.php?go=24>