

THE THEATRE OF GINTARAS VARNAS

INTERVIEWS, ARTICLES, REVIEWS / 1989–2009

Summary

Gintaras Varnas – the representative of the first generation of Lithuanian theatre directors brought in Lithuania, who joined the theatrical world in the eve of the restoration of Lithuanian independence. He started to work for the theatre in the nineties of the 20th century – at the beginning as a technician, and later – as assistant director (when director Jonas Vaitkus produced the play “Scaffold” by Tchingiz Aitmatov in Kaunas Drama Theatre). G. Varnas earned his fame when he became an artistic leader of alternative theatre company “Šėpa” (1988–1990) – his productions “Lullabies of Revolution” and “Communitistic Nostalgias” immediately reacted to the Lithuanian reality ready for political and cultural changes. Theatrical forms employed by G. Varnas in these productions – first of all elements of puppet theatre – are visible in later works by G. Varnas created during past two decades.

After graduating Lithuanian Conservatoire (now – Lithuanian Music and Theatre Academy, where studied with famous Lithuanian theatre directors Jonas Vaitkus and Rimas Tuminas), G. Varnas already directed a number of performances on the main Lithuanian stages, frequently presenting theatrical pieces never staged in Lithuania before. G. Varnas was the first to direct plays “Audience” (1996), “Dona Rosita, or the Language of Flowers” (2003) by Federico García Lorca and „The Life is a Dream” (2000) by; Pedro Calderón de la Barca.

Besides the heritage of theatrical classics G. Varnas pays attention to the contemporary drama: he directed “The Distant Land” (2001) by Jean-Luc Lagarce, “Portia Koglen” (2002) by Marinas Carr and “Innocence” (2005) and “Life On The Praça Roosevelt” (2008) by Dea Loher.

G. Varnas was one of the first Lithuanian theatre directors who started to look for unconventional spaces for their productions: he has chosen the historical observatory of Vilnius University for the production “The Great Theatre of the World” by Pedro Calderón de la Barca, presented in the program of site specific projects “Observa-

tory" in 1997. He also took part in the international site-specific project EURALIEN in Stockholm, where he produced a theatrical piece "The Bus". Collaborating with the international project of art SEAS G. Varnas produced the play "Wasted Land" by Tankred Dorst and Ursula Ehler in desolated printing house in Vilnius (2004). His other productions also shows the deliberate wish to break theatrical conventions: "Heda Gabler" (1998) by Henrik Ibsen was produced in the Long Hall of Kaunas State Drama Theatre, and the audience of "Crime and Punishment" (2004) based on the famous novel of Fyodor Dostoyevsky was placed on the theatre stage.

The special attribute of the creation of G. Varnas – sense of musicality and rhythm, that is most clearly could be seen in his productions of operas – "Salome" (1999) by Richard Strauss, "Don Carlos" (2000) and "Masked Ball" (2002) by Giuseppe Verdi in Latvian National Opera, and "The Queen of Spades" (2001) by Pyotr Tchaikovsky and "Rigoletto" (2003) by Giuseppe Verdi in Lithuanian National Opera and Ballet Theatre. The passionate love of G. Varnas to music and culture of Baroque were reflected in his productions of madrigal operas by Claudio Monteverdi: "The Duel of Tancredi and Clorinda" and "The Dance of the Ungrateful Women" (2008).

In 2005 G. Varnas started his teaching activities in the Lithuanian Music and Theatre Academy. With the first group of his graduates he established theatre company "Utopia" and produced performances "Decalogue" (2008) and "Shakespeareiade" (2009).

During his artistic carrier of two decades G. Varnas was awarded all most significant prizes of Lithuanian culture – several awards of "Kristoforas" (best theatre director of the season in Lithuania), "Fortūna" (best theatre director of the season in Kaunas), and in 2006 he got the Lithuanian National Prize for Culture and Arts.

The present publication is the first collection of reflections on the creative work of Gintaras Varnas, presenting wide selection of his interviews, articles and reviews on his productions, published in Lithuanian media in 1989–2009, which enables to understand his creative issues, ideological, aesthetical and directorial principles.

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