

Defining Contemporary Theater: Global Experiences and Latvian Practices

Zane Kreicberga, Edīte Tišheizere,
Līga Ulberte

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Introduction

The Western culture introduces several traditional variations for the discourse on the paradigm shift in theater that was rooted in processes of the 1960s through the 1970s. The most popular theories, which have also gained support in the theoretical thought of Latvian theater, are the concepts of postdramatic theater by German theater researcher Hans-Thies Lehmann (Lehmann 2006), the performative turn, proposed by Erika Fischer-Lichte (Fischer-Lichte 2008), and the studies of French theater theorist Patrice Pavis (Pavis 1993, Pavis 2013, Pavis 2016). Latvia as a post-Soviet territory, where theater had been a strictly institutionalized and controlled area, experienced significant changes starting from the country regaining its independence in the 1990s. Nowadays, Latvian theater cannot be analyzed in isolation from international processes — both because their presence in Latvia is influential and affects the practice of local theater-makers, and because obvious similarities and parallels can be seen in the development of theater models and the approach to the creative process. Latvian contemporary theater widely uses interdisciplinary artistic practices, amplifies the research and documentary components of theater, applies a collective creation approach, breaks the boundaries of professions and hierarchies, refuses the domination of dramaturgical text (as is characteristic of postdramatic theater), evolves aspects of performativity in actors' work, and changes the role of the audience. Therefore, processes and phenomena in Latvian theater should be analyzed with reference to current theories of theater and performance. However, given the strong lingering dominance of institutionalized repertory theaters and the vast tradition of dramatic theater, Latvian theater can be described using Hans-Thies Lehmann's observation that drama "lives on as a structure — however weakened and exhausted — of the 'normal' theatre: as an expectation of large parts of its audience, as a foundation for many of its means of representation, as a quasi automatically working norm of its drama-turgy" (Lehmann 2006: 25).

Theater theory in Latvia has sought to accommodate postmodernist concepts to new theater phenomena in the 1990s (Radzobe 2004) and to approbate Lehmann's theory of postdramatic theater (Zeltiņa 2008 and Radzobe 2015) for analyzing twenty-first-century Latvian theater phenomena. The latest collective study on Latvian theater, *Latvian Theatre Since Restoration of Independence. Phenomena and Personalities at the Turn of the Century and in the 21st Century* (Tišheizere et al. 2020), fortifies this approach. However, there is a general lack of specific studies in Latvia which could contextualize

processes of Latvian performing arts in relation to current theories in the field and solidify a clear and consolidated terminology. It must be noted that the issue is further exacerbated also by the fact that there are very few translations of theater theory texts, and there is no unanimous understanding regarding the use of key terms even among teachers of theater. Several research projects have been started recently, which should result both in translations of theater theory texts and a Latvian dictionary of performing arts terminology. The purpose of this article is to identify prevailing discourses, in which Latvian theater research has historically included three classical elements of theater — the text, the actor, and the space — to highlight issues of theater terminology in relation to the changing practice of performing arts, and to outline perspectives for further research.

Contemporary Russian theater theorist Anton Sergeev believes that historicity is one of the key issues in consolidating theater terminology and creating absolute meanings for specific terms. In his collection of articles titled *Introduction to Theater Theory*, published in 2011 at the Russian State Institute of Performing Arts, he proposed four groups to classify all theater terms:

- 1) 'direct' theater terms — *actor, stage, role*, etc. Even though they have varying functionality in different theater models, they stem directly from the practice of theater, even though theorists may assign them with some figurative meaning;
- 2) terms that have been forged as part of specific theater systems or models, e.g., Konstantin Stanislavski's *super-objective*, or the *alienation* in Bertolt Brecht's epic theater;
- 3) terms derived from other aesthetic or philosophical systems not directly related to theater, e.g., *structure, deconstruction, text*;
- 4) specific terminology of theater theory, which has been either purposefully created by theater theorists or has gained a specific meaning and context within the process of describing theater. E.g., *direction theater, psychological theater, performance reconstruction*, etc. (Sergeev 2011: 175–178).

The Text, or Dramaturgy

In the Latvian language, the Greek-origin word *dramatourgia* — *dramaturģija* (E. – *dramaturgy*) — has two basic meanings: 1) the theory and art of the construction of drama (dramatic) works; 2) a collection of plays (in an author's bibliography, literature of a nation or an era) (Zuicēna, Roze 2013–2019). The English- and German-speaking European space understands the notion of dramaturgy in different ways. Encyclopedia Britannica primarily strictly separates 'dramatic literature' as a readable text from 'drama' as something that is performed on stage: "Dramatic literature, the texts of plays that can be read, as distinct from

being seen and heard in performance. The term *dramatic literature* implies a contradiction in that *literature* originally meant something written and *drama* meant something performed. Most of the problems, and much of the interest, in the study of dramatic literature stem from this contradiction. Even though a play may be appreciated solely for its qualities as writing, greater rewards probably accrue to those who remain alert to the volatility of the play as a whole.” (Encyclopedia Britannica: Dramatic literature) The British understandably use the German tradition to define the concept of *dramaturgy*: “Dramaturgy, the art or technique of dramatic composition or theatrical representation. In this sense English *dramaturgy* and French *dramaturgie* are both borrowed from German *Dramaturgie*, a word used by the German dramatist and critic Gotthold Lessing in an influential series of essays entitled *Hamburgische Dramaturgie* (*The Hamburg Dramaturgy*), published from 1767 to 1769. The word is from the Greek *dramatourgia*, ‘a dramatic composition’ or ‘action of a play’” (Encyclopedia Britannica: Dramaturgy).

Accordingly, in Latvian, the term *dramaturgi* mainly refers to authors of plays, whereas both in English (*dramaturgs*) and in German (*Dramaturgen*) it refers to the creators of theater and the doers of dramaturgy — a set of practical tasks that help to deliver the text of the play first to the theater and the director, and then to the audience. In twenty-first-century European theater, the responsibilities of dramaturgs mostly include selecting and editing texts, contacting authors, researching various supplementing materials for the needs of the creative team, following the rehearsal process, preparing performance booklets and other print materials, working with media and public relations, moderating conversations, and meeting audiences or supporters before and after performances.

Authors of plays, or dramas, are called *dramatists* or *playwrights* in English and *Dramatiker* in German, and Germans call the collection of plays or theater texts *Dramatik*. Latvian terminology of literature and theater, which was formed under a strong influence of the German language, started using the terms *dramatiķis* and *dramatika* in the first half of the nineteenth century, and they remained in use until the Soviet occupation. During the Soviet period, they were completely replaced by *dramaturģija* and *dramaturgs*, inspired by the respective terms in Russian. This change and confusion is evidenced in the only published (post-Soviet-era) Latvian dictionary of theater terminology, published in 1997: “*Dramatists*. Author of plays. For referring to a creator of stage work, the German-origin word *dramatiķis* may also be used. In any instance, the creator of the work must be distinguished from its assessor, or the *dramaturgs*, which is incorrectly used to refer to an author of a play under the influence of the Russian language. E. *dramatist, playwright*; F. *auteur dramatique*; D. *Dramatiker*; H. *dramaturgo*; I. *drammaturgo*; R. *драматург*”¹ (Straumanis 1997: 46). In the post-Soviet period, the terms *dramatika* and *dramatiķis* have been used on several occasions by literature theorists Viktors Hausmanis and Benedikts Kalnačs, as well as playwright and director Lauris Gundars in their respective studies. Nonetheless, they have not been assimilated by everyday theater jargon. However, theater practice in the second decade

1 The dictionary was compiled by an author living in emigration, working in separation from the Latvian language and the development of Latvian professional theater.

of the twenty-first century, even in Latvia, marks a more defined understanding of the shift of the role of a dramaturg — from being a composer of readable plays, or a dramatist, to a theater practitioner who participates in the rehearsal space or on stage.

In the historiography of Latvian literature and theater, national dramaturgy, from its origins in the 1860s–1870s until the end of the Soviet occupation in the 1990s, has traditionally been perceived as a type of literature — a collection of independent texts of fiction. Play analysis in Latvian was mostly done by literature theorists within the framework of a theoretical or historical discourse² and theater theorists within the context of specific productions³.

A turning point in the development of both Latvian dramaturgy and its research is the year 2001, when the first class of Theater, Film, and Television Dramaturgy under playwright and director Lauris Gundars graduated from the Latvian Academy of Culture. Being a director and screenwriter by education and dominant practical experience at the time, Lauris Gundars had already expressed the idea of dramaturgy as a non-literary phenomenon in the late 1990s: “...dramaturgy is a rather peculiar type of writing, and it cannot be classified under literature since it is not an end product and is subject to further completion. One can be a very good writer, but it does not mean one can write plays.... Dramaturgy is a type of theater (or cinema) activity rather than a writing one. We all know that what the character says is not quite what they actually mean. But if we all know that, why do we insist that dramaturgy is a type of writing? Structure is more important after all: without explicitly stating but rather hinting at what the character really means. It is a craft.” (Gundars 1998: 80) In the context of the National Awakening, Lauris Gundars’s invitation to view the historical development of Latvian dramaturgy had a provocative tone for its era: “We cannot speak of any national dramaturgy whatsoever merely because the dramaturgical construct cannot be national. Of course, an author will mostly write about people and events surrounding them, and they can expose a Latvian spirit or a German spirit, but the construct is all the same. In this respect, for example, the works of Blaumanis⁴ are typical German dramaturgy of their era. And Blaumanis is a perfect craftsman.... If we speak of tradition, we must speak of craft, not topics.” (Gundars 1998: 79)

Ten years later, Lauris Gundars substantiated his methodology for creating dramaturgical text in his book *Dramatica or Rational Poetics* (2009)⁵, which was based on his practical and

2 Benedikts Kalnačs is the author of the most prominent compilation of studies in literary theory: *Latvian Drama. The First Half of the 20th Century* (2004) and *Latvian Drama. The Second Half of the 20th Century* (2006, both together with Viktors Hausmanis), *Baltic Postcolonial Drama* (2011), *20th Century Baltic Drama: Postcolonial Narratives, Decolonial Options* (2016), etc.

3 This type of analysis of separate plays can be read in studies on theater history by theater theorist Silvija Radzobe: *Latvian Theater. The 1970s* (1993), *Latvian Theater. The 1980s* (1995), *Theatre Directing in the 20th Century in the World and in Latvia* (2002), *Theatre Directing in the Baltics* (2006), *Theatre Directing in the World I* (2009), *Theatre Directing in the World II* (2011), etc.

4 Rūdolfs Blaumanis (1863–1908) — playwright, one of the founders of Latvian national dramaturgy.

5 The book was republished in a new author’s edition in Latvian in 2015, in English in 2017, and in Russian in 2020.

pedagogical experience and is still the most extensive Latvian original book on matters of drama technique and theory in Latvian since the collection of articles *Drama as a Criterion* by playwright, director, and theorist Pēteris Pētersons (Pētersons 1987):

a play, unlike a text of poetry or prose, is not an end product, but is rather intended for further interpretation: “The direct recipient at whom the text of the play is aimed is the director, the producer, the actor, or even the omniscient cloakroom attendant. It is only after making its way through the wall of these *intermediary recipients* of various calibers that the work of a playwright reaches its *end user*: the spectator. Consequently, the end product of playwriting is a completely different matter: a theater production.” (Gundars 2017: 18)

dramaturgy is primarily a *technical* type of writing, which can be learned by acquiring certain skills of the craft: “Any base for a dramatic text-based work intended for public performing is significantly more like a refrigerator manual than a novel.... Clearly, the more straightforward the instructions, the greater the odds that the refrigerator will be functioning even in the home of the technically unsavvy consumer — and functioning exactly as intended by the constructor at that.... Dramatic material is a technical instruction that lays out the way to reach the soul of the end addressee — the viewer/listener.” (Gundars 2017: 20)

As early as 1979, Pēteris Pētersons also spoke of the necessity to expand the boundaries of aesthetic perception: “I use the word *drama* neither to refer to the respective type of literature, nor to a genre of dramatic poetry. Going back to the original Greek meaning of *drama* as *action*, I use it to designate the deep flow of circumstances and events, the type and method of a writer’s thought, an important aesthetic criterion. Some have suggested calling it dramatism to avoid reproach. But why call an action dramatism, or actionism, thus diluting the power of the word, reducing its capaciousness? All the *isms* have always seemed to me less meaningful than the base term to which this popular suffix has been added. Therefore, I ask of you — when you read the word *drama*, do not instantly see 60 pages of some play, but try to regard some wider aesthetic horizons beyond the Greek variant of the concept of action.” (Pētersons 1987: 313) Lauris Gundars’ theoretical and practical approach, in turn, rather specifically expanded the understanding of the term of dramaturgy from a literary text to a text written for the needs of the theater (cinema, television), including transitional genres like librettos, dramatizations, scenarios, collages, and others, which had previously not been defined in Latvian theory of literature and theater.

Theater practice also fundamentally influenced the shift in the understanding of the concept of dramaturgy. It was mostly achieved by devised productions created through the collaboration of Alvis Hermanis and actors of the New Riga Theatre, starting with *The Long Life* (2003) and continuing throughout many works of the so-called Latvian Cycle⁶. *The Long Life* is the most recognized Latvian theater performance internationally, and it has participated in many international theater festivals. Actors Baiba Broka, Vilis Daudziņš, Ģirts Krūmiņš,

6 NRT productions *Latvian Stories* (2004), *Latvian Love* (2006), *Marta from the Blue Hill* and *Grandfather* (both in 2009), *Black Milk* and *Friedhofsfest* (both in 2010), *History Research Commission* (2019).

Guna Zariņa, and Kaspars Znotiņš, together with the director and with no participation from a dramaturg, have created a story of one day in the lives of five elderly Latvians within the confines of one communal apartment. The performance has no text, the characters have no names written out in the pamphlet, and yet one of the most important German playwrights of the second half of the twentieth century, Tankred Dorst, invited *The Long Life* to *Neue Stücke aus Europa*, his festival of contemporary European dramaturgy in Wiesbaden, Germany. The main selection criterion for the festival — an interesting staging of an original play written no more than two years ago. When asked about the compliance of *The Long Life* with the dramaturgy format, Tankred Dorst replied: “I believe it is most definitely a play. Even though it contains no text, the performance tells us a story. In this case, dialogue is not even needed.... This is a play without text, just like there are songs without lyrics.” (Rutkēviča 2004: 84)

The fact that the general focus of perceiving dramaturgy has drastically and most probably irreversibly changed from dramaturgy as a type of fiction literature to the theater text as an element of a performative phenomenon, is evidenced by several processes:

plays are rarely published anymore, therefore dramaturgy is gradually disappearing from the scope of Latvian literature award nominees. Instead, since 2013, annual achievements in dramaturgy have been evaluated as part of the Latvian Theater Awards season, awarding the author of a specific text.

The landscape of Latvian contemporary dramaturgy is formed by a generation of authors educated in the twenty-first century both in Latvia and in other European countries in close relation to theater practice, and many have worked on international collaboration projects: Inga Ābele, Jānis Balodis, Ivo Briedis, Rasa Bugavičute-Pēce, Artūrs Dīcis, Matīss Gricmanis, Justīne Kļava, etc.

the creation of text during the staging process by participation of the entire team and a focus on a specific theme has become widely accepted practice. Apart from Alvis Hermanis, directors Reinis Boters, Krista Burāne, Mārtiņš Eihe, Andrejs Jarovojš, Kārlis Krūmiņš, Klāvs Mellis, Vladislavs Nastavševs, Elmārs Senkovs, Valters Siliš, and others have worked in a similar manner.

For a long time, it was mostly experienced directors like Adolf Shapiro or Māra Ķimele⁷ who publicly spoke about their practical experience in the creation of dramatic texts, but now, playwrights themselves do that increasingly often. Aside from Gundars, Jānis Balodis, Matīss Gricmanis, and Rasa Bugavičute-Pēce have also reflected on their working methods.⁸

7 See more: Šapiro, Ādolfš (1991). *Starp-bridis*. Rīga: Liesma; Zole, Ieva (2007). *Sarunas ar Māru Ķimeli*. Rīga: Jumava.

8 See more: Bugavičute, Rasa (2013). Preface. Zeltiņa, Guna, Reinsons, Sanita (eds.) (2013). *Text in Contemporary Theatre: The Baltics within the World Experience*. Cambridge Scholars Publishing, pp. xi–xii; Gricmanis, Matīss (2019). True Dramaturgy vs. Fictional Autobiography. Pērkone-Redoviča, Inga (ed.).

The analysis of dramaturgical processes has moved from literature history books to studies dedicated to theater. Separate articles on the role of text in theater can be found in almost every history of Latvian theater.⁹

A broader understanding of dramaturgical text allows us to stop treating the literary material of a performance with expectations of the mandatory characteristics of classic dramaturgy: dialogue, cues, a causal development of events, etc. One of the most extreme examples of this type of contemporary dramaturgy is Austrian Nobel laureate Elfriede Jelinek's texts for theaters, staged in theaters all over the globe. Inga Rozentāle, the translator of *Bambiland* (2003) (the only play by Jelinek available in Latvian), describes Jelinek's texts as 'polyphonic text fields' where indications of the time and space of action and specific personalities disappear and speakers' voices seemingly blend into one: "A basic principle of dramaturgy that a person reveals their character with the help of speech is replaced with a ceaseless act of speaking" (Rozentāle 2008: 69). So it essentially becomes a characteristic of both content and form — the text does not lay any claim on revealing any objective truth, but deliberately changes perspective, sometimes even within the same sentence. Jelinek liberally and easily quotes other texts without any effort at making them recognizable; they are often redone and repurposed for the rhythm of the author's own language. Therefore, the reader must find their own way in the polyphony of the text to figure out who is talking to whom — is it the characters to each other, to the audience, or to the author? For now, such *text fields*, *text spaces*, or *text territories* so typical of postdramatic theater practice have been rarely used in Latvian dramaturgy and theater and therefore little reflected upon in theater research. But, sooner or later, they will have to be named.

The Actor, or the Performer

Latvian acting education continues the tradition of the so-called 'Russian school,' which is based on the Stanislavski system with variations and interpretations, and it is still considered the basis of theater art. The criterion for its results is the actor's ability to become incarnated in a role, which is the creative interpretation of a dramaturgical character created in the collaboration of the director and the actor within the context of the performance. This robust foundation is indisputable among the majority of the younger generation of theater makers

Culture Crossroads, Vol. 14, pp. 104–109; Balodis, Jānis (2020). text means anything, text means nothing. Mellēna-Bartkeviča, Lauma (ed.). *Contemporary Latvian Theatre*. Rīga: Zinātne, pp. 154–168.

- 9 See more: Zeltiņa, Guna, Reinsons, Sanita (eds.) (2013). *Text in Contemporary Theatre: The Baltics within the World Experience*. Cambridge Scholars Publishing; Uzula-Petrovska, Maija (2015). Jauno režisoru un dramaturgu sadarbība. Radzobe, Silvija (red.). *Latvijas jaunā režija*. Rīga: Latvijas Universitāte, 303.–313. lpp.; Jonīte, Dita (2020). Dramaturģija. Tagadnes dokumentēšana un politika teātrī. Tīšheizerē, Edite, Rodiņa, Ieva, Jonīte, Dita, Mellēna-Bartkeviča, Lauma. *Neatkarības laika teātris*. Rīga: LU LFMI, 342.–381. lpp.; Ulberte, Līga (2020). Methods of Text Production in Latvian Contemporary Theatre. Mellēna-Bartkeviča, Lauma (ed.). *Contemporary Latvian Theatre*. Rīga: Zinātne, pp. 62–73.

and teachers as well, and it must be kept in mind when looking at the transformation of acting in twenty-first-century Latvian theater.

Theater theorist Līvija Akurātere's *Acting in Latvian Theater* (Akurātere 1983) is a fundamental study which, despite the partly antiquated terminology it uses, still reads with interest and provides a structured insight into the development of acting in Latvia from the beginnings of theater in the nineteenth century up to the 1980s. It is still the only full-volume scientific monograph about acting in Latvian theater. Continuing the opposition of two acting techniques expanded upon by Denis Diderot in his opus *Paradox of the Actor* (Diderot 2018) to a certain extent, Akurātere describes a separation between an actor's types of existence: "Until now, theater history has known two leading principles in acting: a theater of displaying and a theater of feeling. In practice, these two directions often coexist and fuse even in the performance of one and the same actor. In theory, however, they were already divided when Latvian theater began." (Akurātere 1983: 20) In modern times, we would rather adapt the terms of histrionic and verisimilar acting codes proposed in Roberta Pearson's film analysis (Pearson 1992). They could be relevant considering the still large proportion of dramatic theater traditions in Latvian theater, which also determines the type of acting. Contrary to Patrice Pavis' opinion who, reflecting upon modern acting, notes that "the actor does not always have to imitate, or even to represent, a character" because "we are no longer in an aesthetic of imitation" (Pavis 2014: 5), Latvian theater is at least partly still in it, and an actor's ability to mimic or impersonate a dramatic character is considered a criteria of their professional capability. At the same time, the practices and techniques of acting in our country have become more varied and developed in agreement with the pursuit of a new theater language in directing. The effect of this pursuit on the transformations of acting will be reviewed below.

Cinema theorist Inga Pērkone uses and explains the histrionic and verisimilar performance codes in her monograph *Stage of the Screen: on the Acting in Latvian Cinema* (Pērkone 2020: 44–47). Her study is considered the second fundamental scientific monograph on acting in Latvian. Moreover, Pērkone has vast knowledge and an ability to layer various current cinema, theater, and cultural theories to view acting principles in theater and cinema conjointly. Such an approach in the Latvian context is unique and very rewarding because, as the author of the book remarks, Latvian cinema and theater are very closely connected, and "the bonding elements of both fields are actors." (Pērkone 2020: 11).

The collaborative work of 22 authors *100 Outstanding Latvian Actors* (Radzobe 2018a and Radzobe 2018b), published in 2018 for the centenary of the Republic of Latvia, features two substantial volumes which rather focus on issues related to the theoretical reflection on acting. The entire publication contains no reference to any acting theories except for Stanislavski's opus *My Life in Art* (Stanislavski 1972), mentioned in a single article, and citations of Līvija Akurātere's research in some articles. The portrayal of actors is mostly dominated by a biographical approach, and the analysis of actors' performances is largely concentrated on interpreting the role in the context of a literary or dramaturgical material, rather than an exploration of the methods and techniques of acting itself. Paradoxically, the

one author who has most closely approached any conclusions on the ‘backstage’ of acting is journalist Ivars Kleins, who published the book *Embodiment: between Art and Personal Life* (Kleins 2016) based on in-depth interviews with 20 Latvian actors of different generations, which is occasionally quoted in the aforementioned collective work of Latvian theater researchers. It can be concluded that there is quite a bit of work yet to be done in Latvian theater research so that current theories are approbated in theoretical reflection on acting and appropriate terms are introduced.

The demand for a new type of actor in Latvian theater arose as early as the 1990s with the arrival of a new generation of talented directors. At the time, they had separated themselves from the previously ruling tradition of psychological realism in Latvian theater on principle, although these directors all returned to it in one way another at later stages of their creative journeys. The brightest among this group were Alvis Hermanis, Regnārs Vaivars, and the trio of Dž. Dž. Džilindžers, Viesturs Kairišs, and Gatis Šmits, who initially presented themselves as the *Nepanesamā teātra artelis* (*Artel of Unbearable Theater*). In their first productions, they seemed to ‘forget’ the rules of psychological theater acting which they had learnt as students, and they made their actors ‘forget’ them as well, thus making them free and available for a new type of existence, experiences, and functions in their performances. These approaches draw parallels with Lehmann’s definition of “the structurally changed quality of the performance text,” which he uses to describe the 1980s–1990s phenomena in Western European postdramatic theater: “it becomes more presence than representation, more shared than communicated experience, more process than product, more manifestation than signification, more energetic impulse than information” (Lehmann 2006: 85). It was not that actors were not playing parts, but the representation of qualities in a logically constructed and complete plot was not the primary objective anymore, and it gave way to other tasks and functions. For example, an actor could become a sign, like in productions by Vaivars¹⁰ or Kairišs¹¹, also several productions by Hermanis¹², which present a dominance of visuality and semiotic puzzles. Or an actor who fully merges with the atmosphere of the performance by physically embodying it, like in Gatis Šmits’ productions¹³. Or, as theater researcher Ilze Kļaviņa accurately characterizes Džilindžers’ approach¹⁴: “The director declines the demonstration of an artistic attitude towards what is happening onstage and replaces it with the self-expression of actors, and demands the self-expression of the audience.” (Kļaviņa 2004: 175) Or an actor who assumes the intimacy of the text to an extent where it becomes almost

10 For example, in: Tadeuš Ruževič’s *White Wedding* (Theater Skatuve, 1996), *Alice* is based on Lewis Carroll’s works (Theater Skatuve, 1996), Hārdijs Lediņš’ and Kaspars Rolšteins’ *Rolshtein on the Beach* (Soros Center for Contemporary Arts, Rīga, 1997).

11 For example, Alexander Pushkin’s *The Stone Guest* (Nepanesamā teātra artelis, 1996), Mircea Eliade’s *Virgin Christina* (New Rīga Theater, 1997), Fyodor Dostoyevsky’s *The Idiot* (New Rīga Theatre, 1999).

12 For example, Yukio Mishima’s *Madame de Sade* (New Rīga Theatre, 1993), Oscar Wilde’s *The Portrait of Dorian Gray* (New Rīga Theatre, 1994).

13 For example, *Richard III, or the Winter of Yorks* based on William Shakespeare’s play (Nepanesamā teātra artelis, 1996), David Harrower’s *Knives in Hens* (Dailes Theatre, 2006).

14 Dž. Dž. Džilindžers *Three Sisters. Not Chekhov* (Nepanesamā teātra artelis, 1997).

documentary in its nature and the character fully fuses with the actor's personality to turn the viewer into a witness of an intimate self-revelation — as in Hermanis' productions¹⁵. Or a deliberate use of elements of performance art, popular culture, and subculture in Vaivars's productions¹⁶, which combine actors and non-actors in the same performance and execute the relativity of professionalism so characteristic of postdramatic theater.

Even though these pursuits of the 1990s looked innovative within the context of Latvian theater and may be perceived as a protest against the former homogeneity of theater, they did not appear out of nowhere. On one hand, they have a background in Soviet-era alternative culture practices, which were mainly implemented within private initiatives or amateur movements — artist performances (central figures: Andris Grinbergs in the 1970s and Hārdijs Lediņš in the 1980s) such as *Rīgas Pantomīma*, led by actor and director Roberts Ligers, the theater of director Ilmārs Ēlerts, etc. They have parallels with the development of performance art and the search for a new theater language in the Western world¹⁷. In the 1990s, it was continued by several noticeable personalities who became the formal and informal teachers of the young generation of actors and directors (e.g., Modris Tenisons, Ansis Rūtentāls, and Māra Ķimele) or collaborated on separate projects, thus spreading their experiences and worldviews (e.g., collaboration between Hārdijs Lediņš, Kaspars Rolšteins, and Regnārs Vaivars¹⁸).

On the other hand, at least two brilliant acting teachers, Māra Ķimele and Pēteris Krilovs, must be mentioned as important educators of a generation of contemporarily thinking and open actors. Diploma works staged by Krilovs and his students¹⁹ in the 1990s were surprising, with a new and fresh level of genuineness in acting; in these works, psychologically substantiated motivation and expression was often combined with eccentricity. Actors coming from Krilovs's school were at the core of the New Riga Theatre ensemble led by Alvis Hermanis²⁰. In the first decade of the new century, as a result of Hermanis's documentary project

- 15 For example, *Like a Slow and Lazy River is the Return* based on Steven Soderbergh's script for the film *Sex, Lies, and Videotape* (New Rīga Theatre, 1993), *Like a Calm and Peaceful Voice* based on the novel *Vox* by Nicholson Baker (New Rīga Theatre, 1996).
- 16 For example, *Alice* based on Lewis Carroll's works (Theater Skatuve, 1996), Hārdijs Lediņš' and Kaspars Rolšteins' *Rolshtein on the Beach* (Soros Center for Contemporary Arts, Rīga, 1997), Oscar Wilde's *Salome* (New Rīga Theater, 1998).
- 17 For example, one can draw parallels with the distrust in text and a shift of focus towards the pursuit of an intense and ultimately authentic presence of the actor, which is characteristic of theater-creators of the 1960s and has been captured by American theater theorist Elinor Fuchs (mentioning examples like Grotowski, Brook, Julian Beck and Judith Malina, Chaikin, Schechner, etc.). In the 1970s, it was joined by 'performance theater' (term coined by Fuchs, directors like Foreman, Wilson, LeCompte, etc.) (Fuchs 1999).
- 18 Hārdijs Lediņš, Kaspars Rolšteins *Rolshtein on the Beach* (Soros Center for Contemporary Arts, Rīga, 1997).
- 19 William Faulkner's *The Sound and the Fury* (Latvian State Conservatory Class of Daugavpils Theatre, 1991), Fyodor Dostoyevsky's *Demons* (Latvian State Conservatory Class of Daugavpils Theatre, 1993), Fyodor Dostoyevsky's *The Brothers Karamazov* (Acting and Directing Class at the Latvian Academy of Culture, 1997).
- 20 Baiba Broka, Vilis Daudziņš, Andris Keišs, Ģirts Krūmiņš, Kaspars Znotiņš, etc.

researching the human essence (the so-called Latvian Cycle), he and his colleagues become cardinally new types of actors/researchers/storytellers, who could simultaneously handle the ‘higher elevation’ of traditional psychological theater. Māra Ķimele, being both a student of the famous Russian director Anatoly Efros and a participant of performances by 1970s alternative artist groups, organically combined methods of classical dramatic psychological theater and the necessity to experiment and search for new types of actorial existence, both in her productions and her pedagogical work²¹. The range of her creative work, including the influence of her teaching on theater processes in Latvia, is a rich source for further research.

In the twenty-first century, young generations of directors and playwrights have further expanded the spectrum of acting expressions. One can merely sketch out a few of the directions. Firstly, due to an increase in the application of principles of devised theater, the actor becomes a co-author of the performance more and more often. Pavis notes that “the status of an actor within the dramaturgy also changes: the actor no longer says the text as a role, from her point of view, but she sometimes acts as a narrator” (Pavis 2014: 6). Therefore, the acting sways between a dramatic actor who impersonates a character and an epic storyteller who speaks about the character. The changing and interaction of these positions enhances the significance of presence in acting, matching it to Lehmann’s idea that “the actor of postdramatic theatre is often no longer the actor of a role but a performer offering his/her presence on stage for contemplation” (Lehmann 2006: 135). Secondly, in devised theater the playwright, director, choreographer, or other non-actors often perform themselves. It follows that the significance of an actor’s skills is made relative — and the presence of the respective personality emerges, as well as its close relation to the theme and contents of the production. Thirdly, Latvian theater also has examples of ‘performance theater’²², which are characterized by a “continuous awareness of itself as performance, and [in] its unavailability for re-presentation” (Fuchs 1999: 79). The participation of actors in such projects might have a reverse effect on their future portrayals in dramatic theater. Lastly, it must be noted that the principles of a physical theater and contemporary dance-based thinking have an increasing impact on the process of theater creation, which also means the distancing of acting from the ‘forms of life itself’ characteristic of realism. Director Vladislavs Nastavševs’s productions are the most prominent examples of the approach of exaltation of actors’ physical actions (oftentimes even to the point of serious difficulty or even danger)²³. In this way, he accomplishes a heightened sense of the (physical) presence of actors, while also preventing or even making it impossible for them to lay back on pure representation of character.

21 Some indicative examples of productions: *The Book of Ruth* (NRT, 1994) based on Bible stories, which could be described as an attempt to approach the expressions of ritual theater, where the collective process is superior to the individual performance of any single actress, and *Shakespeare Loves Me. Sonnets* (NRT, 1996) and *Poetry* (NRT, 2014), where actors master a seemingly infinite number of Shakespeare’s sonnets or verses by Latvian poems and continuously improvise.

22 Interesting pursuits in this area have been accomplished, for example, by director Mārtiņš Eihe in his *Freedom* (New Theatre Institute of Latvia, 2007), *Sarah Kane* (Artistic Collective Nomadi, 2011), *Tanya’s Birthday* (Gertrude Street Theater, 2016).

23 For example, *Mitya’s Love* by Ivan Bunin (*Dirty Deal Teatro*, 2010), August Strindberg’s *Miss Julie* (Valmiera Drama Theatre, 2012), *Black Sperm* (Gertrude Street Theater, 2015), etc.

Collaboration between directors and contemporary dance choreographers to create movement scores for performances and fine-tune the psychophysical expressions of actors has become nearly standard practice in twenty-first-century Latvian theater²⁴.

After watching Latvian theater performances, foreign professionals often remark on the fine quality of acting. One might explain it with the amalgamation of various acting techniques without fully denying the foundation of Stanislavski's methods. In further theoretical reflection, we might use American performance researcher Philip Auslander's approach, who, in his book *From Acting to Performance* (Auslander 1997), examines the changes in acting in the second half of the twentieth century with the expanse of the concept of theater to include various performative expressions. His view has developed "from an original commitment to theatre toward a broader conception of performance and its genres" (Auslander 1997: 1). This sentence provides a certain juxtaposition of theater as a term for a narrower phenomenon, and performance as a broader definition of on-stage phenomena which include theater as well. Most likely, an actor's transformation into a performer, a performance's transformation into an event, and a viewer's transformation into a participant, which has already been approbated in the practice and theory of contemporary theater, will not annul the presence of conventional dramatic theater in Latvia. This makes theoretical reflection on acting in Latvia intriguing because the same actors often work in both areas.

Space

Space, as an integral and often integrating component of a performance, is a defining characteristic of twenty-first-century contemporary theater. As Lehmann writes, as a result of the destruction of the logocentric hierarchy in postdramatic theater, any other component of the performance can become dominant, and it applies to space to the greatest extent. "Instead of text-based dramaturgy, we often see visual dramaturgy." (Leman 2013: 151) It is characteristic of Lehmann to include space and movement when writing about visual dramaturgy. This combination is one of the essential innovative ideas in Lehmann's theory of postdramatic theory, and it gives an intriguing focus for further research of contemporary theater.

It must be noted that the interpretation of space in Latvian theater has corresponded with contemporary paradigms and current pursuits of visual and performative arts at a relatively early stage of professionalization — at the end of the first decade of the twentieth century, when professional theater was but 40 years old. The performance *Fire and Night* (1991) at the New Riga Theatre (whose name would be taken over at the end of the twentieth century by a theater with international recognition thanks to its leader, Alvis Hermanis) marked a

24 See the chapter 'Contemporary Dance and Art' by contemporary dance researcher Dita Jonīte in the collective monograph *Theater of Independence* (Jonīte 2020: 441–448).

revolutionary step in the synergy of directing and scenography. In the 1920s–1930s, Dailes Theatre worked in pursuit of the contemporary, and they managed to get in line with the trends of both modernism and historical avant-gardism in terms of the usage and development of space. Brilliant scenographers, representatives of modernism, worked in other theaters as well, developing what modern avant-garde scholars define as the ‘dramaturgy of space’ (Kosinski 2018: 85), even if not necessarily in combination with directing. Theater of this period and its use of space has recently been brought up in several studies, especially underlining the importance of these phenomena in an international context and their closeness to Western movements of avant-garde and modernism, as well as their link to twenty-first-century dramatic and postdramatic theater (Rodiņa 2020, Tišheizere 2018; 2020; 2021).

Space and its significance in Soviet-era Latvian theater, however, has not been adequately researched. Separate studies have been dedicated to stage costumes, examining them in a visual arts context (Blūma 1988) or as analyses of officially recognized works by certain artists such as Ilmārs Blumbergs (Berjzkins 1983). Yet there are hardly any publications about alternative Soviet-era processes in Latvian performance art which deviated from the canons of socialist realism. Only in the first decade of the twenty-first century was evidence of youth counterculture collected (Valpēters 2010) and performative expressions theoretically examined in the context of visual arts (Matule 2009) without relating them to theater. The lack of such studies regarding theater has left a substantial void in the general understanding of art of the period. Alternative culture of the 1970s–1980s is a vast territory for research not only in the field of theater, but also, in a broader sense, in the field of performing arts. It is hindered by a lack of evidential matter. Alternative culture rarely was assigned the status of professional and thus officially researchable art. For example, the internationally acclaimed ensemble *Rīgas Pantomīma* never left their amateur status behind. Those productions and other events at professional theaters which did not conform with the socialist realism paradigm were either not recorded/reviewed at all or received negative critiques instead of analytical ones. Alternative or experimental, officially unrecognized theater pieces were often documented only on non-professional video recordings with no sound, in photos, or in contemporaries’ memories, which may be both selective and imprecise.

However, new currents and innovative aesthetic ideas were found precisely in the depths of informal, alternative art. They were often formed through a peculiar adaptation of non-systematic and fragmented information from the outside world: standalone articles, films, and ‘samizdat’ publications did not make up a complete informational landscape, but they inspired interpretation and independent and unique development which could hugely deviate from the original intention. In such an indirect manner, Latvia learned about Jerzy Grotowski’s programmatic performances and received a Russian translation of his late-1960s theoretical work on the ‘poor theater,’ replicated by typewriter. It was independently perceived, interpreted, and added upon by director, scenographer, and mime Modris Tenisons.

Studies of this period would be particularly important because alternative culture of the 1970s and 1980s, which resonated with current art processes of the West and also of aesthetically and politically more-liberated socialist countries, had a significant impact on youth

counterculture and, through it, on rising talents who reached their professional peak at the turn of the twenty-first century and went on to dictate major processes. Alvis Hermanis, who was Modris Tenisons's student for a while, has admitted that Tenisons's explorations were physically and spiritually equivalent to Jerzy Grotowski's aesthetics (Vējš 2021: 81–85). Hermanis invited Tenisons to be the co-author to one of his most programmatic stagings, *By Gorky* (2004), which utterly changed the understanding of space in recent Latvian theater.

It must be mentioned that twenty-first-century researchers from other post-socialist countries are also attempting to fill similar voids in their theater histories, and they are facing the same challenges in finding facts and evidence and sometimes even longer periods of alternative culture, because, as early as the first post-war decade, one could observe “the flourishing of what we now like to refer to as ‘unofficial’ artistic practices...within the monolithic ‘Eastern’ aesthetic and social code which...tried to create a parallel theatrical art, freed from both ideology and the grip of state theatres, and thus also from the aesthetics of socialist realism” (Svetina 2010: 15). Unofficial, alternative culture that diverged from the canon of socialist realism allows one to see the many similarities between Western trends and processes in Eastern and Central European socialist countries.

This applies to theater in Soviet Latvia as well. Characteristically, representatives of visual arts and the new age of scenography such as Ilmārs Blumbergs and Andris Freibergs were actively involved or at least participated in Latvian Soviet-era performing arts — not only theater, but also movement arts, which were most prominently presented by the ensemble *Rīgas Pantomīma* under Roberts Ligers, as well as the works of Modris Tenisons both in Latvia and Lithuania. They brought the spirit and innovativeness of contemporary theater to the ‘big’ state theaters where they worked, and they trained mainstream audiences for art that demands much larger individual involvement, thus laying the aesthetic foundation for creative explorations of the 1990s and the early twenty-first century already under the circumstances of an independent Latvia and its open information space.

A zenith of such a synthesis between alternative culture and official art was the staging of Henrik Ibsen's *Brand* at Dailies Theatre (1975, dir. Arnolds Liniņš). The performance, which, apart from Latvia, was only ever shown in socialist Bulgaria and USSR capital Moscow, most clearly featured the destruction of a logocentric hierarchy and had a plot structure “formed by simultaneously communicated signs through various channels” (Radzobe 2015: 138). This structure was characteristic of postdramatic theater, which was experiencing its bloom in the West. These ‘channels’ were music — choir recitatives containing parts of Ibsen's text; movement — which was shaped by a Modris Tenisons' movement score for the protagonist and the moving choir; and a scene design created by Ilmārs Blumbergs — a low, inverted pyramid with a single point of support. It not only embodied the main character's creed of ‘all or nothing,’ but directly affected the type, rhythm, and range of movement of the actors and the moving choir. The simple construction had infinite expressive possibilities which manifested only through interaction with the moving choir. This performance precisely matches Lehmann's thesis on integral visual theater, which was experiencing its rise in the West in the 1970s and 1980s: “Scenography...reveals itself to the eye of the spectator

as a certain text, a scenic poem where a human body has become a metaphor, and movement itself — an orthography, an ‘inscription’ rather than a ‘dance’” (Leman 2013: 152). This staging could easily be a match to the opuses of Robert Wilson, Jan Lauwers, Pina Bausch, Tadeusz Kantor, and other masters of postdramatic theater.

Performance art was a momentous phenomenon of alternative culture which left no trace in contemporary criticism or research, yet had an impact on the aesthetic views of the new generation of artists, including views on the possibilities of using space. Representatives of performance art followed the same path as Serbian multimedia artist Marina Abramović, albeit in a less radical way. Artist Andris Grinbergs initiated over 30 performances, called *happenings* at the time, which involved many prominent art personalities, including director Māra Ķimele. The range of such *happenings* was very vast, and their boundaries were nearly undefinable — from meticulously prepared stagings to spontaneous campaigns, from street pantomime and informal music concerts to walks along specific routes.²⁵ As one of the performance participants, Imants Lancmanis, recalls, “we liked playing around with reality” (Valpēters 2010, 138). This playfulness corresponds with the marks of Western contemporary performance described by German theater theorist Erika Fischer-Lichte: (1) artists “aspire to create not a work of art (artefact), but rather an event”; (2) the aim of the performance is to make audiences not (or not only) to “understand, but to experience and delve into the gained sensual experience, which transcends the boundaries of comprehension”; (3) the audience are an active part of the performance, and they may participate and change its course; (4) the performance is an event that cannot be reproduced or repeated (Fischer-Lichte 2015: 27–38). At the same time, they were a particular prototype of site-specific theater, especially wedding ceremonies and other performances at Rundāle Palace, which raised awareness of non-theater spaces and made “the space ‘talk’ and reveal itself in a new light” (Leman 2013: 250).

Despite the Iron Curtain, Latvian theater exhibited many trends which were also current in Western art, even during the years of the so-called Era of Stagnation under Brezhnev and in isolation from international information. When the Iron Curtain fell and Latvia gained its independence, space and its prospects for performative arts reached the most rapid development, simultaneously marking a certain divide among directors and scenographers of the younger generation. New principles for the use of space arrived thanks to the opportunity to frequently participate in the Prague Quadrennial, which was a melting pot of innovative ideas. However, practical implementation of those ideas only began in the late 1990s with the end of the economic crash brought about by the change of the social order, which also affected the theater. They were objective circumstances which have been analyzed in studies concerning Latvian theater during the shift of the social and political system (Tišheizere

25 A notable example is the wedding of Imants and Ieva Lancmanis at Rundāle (1971). The Lancmanis couple were heading the restoration of the Baroque palace, designed by Rastrelli and demolished in the war and Soviet times, and both they and the guests wore Baroque costumes and wigs and acted appropriately — it is evidenced not only in photographs but also Maija Tabaka’s painting *Wedding in Rundāle*. The following year, Andris Grinbergs used the wedding ritual format to stage his own as the Wedding of Jesus Christ with a marital bed on the sea shore; the entire ceremony was open and captured by the best photographers of the time.

2020) and in the context of twenty-first-century directing and theoretical thought (Ulberte 2015), as well as in the monograph about the luminary of the Latvian scenography school, Andris Freibergs (Zieda 2016).

Another impactful event was the arrival of Latvian director Baņuta Rubess in Latvia in the early 1990s — she was born, raised and educated in the Western world, had a postmodern worldview and a background in postdramatic theater. Her contributions and key impulses for the development of Latvian theater are still underrated. Rubess arrived with considerable experience in alternative theater and attempted to graft many of its techniques onto Latvian theater. Since institutional theaters were still dominant in Latvia with their heavy and inert management, many of the principles initiated by Rubess did not take root right away, but only came to life at a later time and in the creative works of others.

Rubess constantly worked with the method of devised theater, which aspires to lessen the expressions of logocentric and hierarchical theater, but most importantly demands an active and equal creative initiative from each participant of the performance. Later on, this principle blossomed in the collective works of Alvis Hermanis and the New Riga Theatre, which in turn influenced a generation of young directors in the second decade of the twenty-first century and radically changed their attitudes towards space, including drawing the audience into it.

Rubess staged one of the first interactive performances, *Hotel Kristina* (2006) at the Latvian National Theatre, where audience members could vote on the possible finales via text message. Ten years later, this type of theater and space was significantly developed by Mārtiņš Eihe in *Tanya's Birthday* (2016) at Gertrude Street Theater — in it, actors and viewers, who were also participants, literally sat around a celebration table in honor of Tanya's (whom anyone could become) birthday, sharing various memories of the past. Anyone could step into the actors' dialogues or monologues with their own story, thus changing the course of the conversation or discussion. Moreover, the 'performative space,' as defined by Fischer-Lichte, was significantly expanded: it included not only the specific area of performance, but also two separate parts of Latvian society — Latvians and the so-called Russian speakers, and therefore different fields of historical perception.

Similarly, in her practice, Rubess steadily worked on bringing theater out of the stage box as the only legitimate space. The first attempts to perform plays in other spaces besides the stage were made as early as the mid-1970s, when Māra Ķimele staged Jean Anouilh's *Médée* with the Valmiera Drama Theatre not inside the theater itself, but in the Sīmanis Church next to it (which was a museum at the time), and Uldis Pūcītis staged *The Boys of the Moss Village* in the courtyard of the Youth Theater. However, the principle of site-specific theater is deliberately applied in Rubess's productions.

Rubess implemented an immense site-specific theater project titled *Escape from Troy* (New Theatre Institute of Latvia, 2004) by compressing several chronological and geographical layers into the same time and space — the former military territory of Karosta in Liepāja:

the real coast of the Baltic Sea, where refugee boats had departed at the end of World War II, events of Euripides' *The Trojan Women* and the tragedy of 9/11, which was still a fresh memory. Rubess continued with this activation of time and space in *Mrs. Benjamin: Tips for Modern Living* (Arts and Music Support Foundation, 2009), where she folded the consciousness/unconsciousness and wakefulness/nightmare realities into the life story of a specific woman — Emīlija Benjamiņa, the queen of press in interwar Latvia. The experience was amplified by the performance space — a house belonging to the Benjamiņš family. This production and its artistic impulses inspired numerous productions about important personalities of Latvian culture and art in the following decade²⁶, performed under nearly authentic conditions — in museums, exhibition halls, and the like — thus developing the various opportunities of site-specific theater. The Latvian theater landscape is, of course, riddled with the accomplishments of many others besides Baņuta Rubess; however, she was an important and encouraging player in its development for over two decades.

The non-governmental sector plays an important part in the newest reality of Latvian theater and the advancement of theoretical thought. A different understanding and usage of space continues mostly in the alternative (in this case, not so much politically denied as deviating from the psychological mainstream of state repertory theaters) productions and regular festivals of the so-called independent theaters — the main example being the international festival Homo Novus²⁷ organized by the New Theatre Institute of Latvia (since 1995).

One of the most developed directions for the pursuit of theater spaces in new Latvian theater practice is site-specific theater, which manifests differently in each performance, making the space 'talk' in different ways, imposing new rules for interaction upon their audiences, making them an integral, active, and effective component of a united time and space. A successful and innovative example of site-specific and environmental theater is Valmiera Summer Theater Festival (since 2016), which has selected an entire town as its performance area, using schools, the fire depot, a pool, a night club, public parks, construction sites, and backyards, thus removing the traditional boundary between actors and viewers and making this type of interaction a common and understandable form of communication.

Director Valters Šilis has also developed site-specific theater in his performance walks *Mārupīte* (Dirty Deal Teatro, 2012) and *Forest and City* (Latvian National Theatre, 2020), where he combines the performance with principles of immersive theater. Site-specificity principles were used by Mārtiņš Eihe at Rēzekne's *Joriks* theater, in the urban performance *My Neighbor, a Jew* (2021) — collaborative stories about this Eastern Latvian town in Latvia and its Jewish inhabitants who became victims of the Holocaust. The performance takes place in various places in town surrounding the renovated Green Synagogue, and audience

26 For example, performances dedicated to Latvian artists, developed by producer Laila Baumann and the Arts and Music Support Foundation, such as *Pauļuks. Frames* based on Zigurds Konstants' book (dir. Inese Mičule, 2012), Ivo Briedis' *Padegs and Padegs* (dir. Varis Piņķis, 2015), Ivo Briedis' *From Rozentāls* (dir. Paula Pļavniece, 2016), *Lightning Thoughts. Irbīte* (dir. Inga Tropa, 2018) etc.

27 <http://homonovus.lv/>

groups travel from one ‘nest’ of the performance to another. In this performance, the notion of space is expanded by the inclusion of time — a past which continues in the present. The performance thus becomes an exploratory study on the threshold of documentary theater.

Director Krista Burāne consistently works in the urban environment as her creative space, and she largely bases her works on people living in the environment, encouraging them to make an art object of their lives or fragments thereof as well as to change the attitudes of society. Krista Burāne’s works *The Reading Room* (in collaboration with Mārtiņš Eihe, 2015), *The Borders* (2016), *Fortress* (2017), and *trees have stopped talking since then* (2020) feature the principle described by Lehmann on the performance space of Jan Lauwers, where “actors often are like viewers and look at what the other performers are doing” — namely, “it functions as ‘gaze direction’ in painting” (Lehmann 2013: 249). Krista Burāne, however, uses this technique while blending it with a real-life event, nearly erasing the boundary between the involved performers and their observers.

It can be concluded that in contemporary Latvian theater the concept of space has been substantially broadened — it has changed from a specific place of performance, a theater building and stage, to the outside world, the urban environment, and involves not only the present, but history as well. But most significantly, it has changed the relationship between the audience and actors and has united them as components of the same space of action which are equally important for the course and meaning of the action. Considering the growing variety of theatrical expressions, adequate professional terminology should be implemented and developed.

Instead of the Conclusion

Klāvs Mellis — Latvian actor, director, and playwright, artistic and intellectual leader of the non-governmental theater group *Kvadrifrons* — clearly represents the universal artist of the postdramatic era: he can write performance texts, create a space, produce, perform, and administer the theater group as well. Reflecting on the challenges of a pandemic-stalled theater, in the spring of 2021, Klāvs Mellis wrote: “The question of where theater begins and ends is not new at all — various conflicting performative practices and trends are rather difficult to gather under the umbrella of a single term. Even Hans-Thies Lehmann’s popular concept of postdramatic theater essentially confirms only one thing: yes, many things are happening, and all of it counts, more or less. Over the last hundred years, formulating theater has been one of the essential components of the performing arts process: contemporary, postdramatic theater has become one of its most interesting phenomena, and arts research and exploration one of the main tasks of this trend” (Mellis 2021). The analysis of new and changing phenomena in Latvian theater in the context of contemporary theories helps one see its connections to global theater culture and implement new terminology for a more adequate communication with the audience.

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Laikmetīgā teātra definēšana: pasaules pieredze un Latvijas prakse

Zane Kreicberga, Edīte Tišheizere,
Līga Ulberte

Atslēgvārdi: postdramatiskais teātris, performance,
teksts, dramaturģija, aktieris, performeris, telpa

Raksta fokusā ir jaunās parādības laikmetīgajā Latvijas teātrī un to definēšanas nepieciešamība, balstoties gan uz starptautisko kontekstu un teorētiskajiem pētījumiem, gan uz Latvijas performatīvo mākslu praksi. Skatot teātri trijās hipostāzēs – no dramaturģijas jeb teksta, aktiera un/ vai performeru un telpas un kustības aspekta, tiek uzrādītas jaunās, 21. gadsimtam raksturīgās parādības, to iespējamie definēšanas veidi, kā arī vēsturiskās saknes daudzām laikmetīgā teātra parādībām, bez kuru izpētes un izpratnes nav iespējama terminoloģijas radīšana. Apzināta jau pastāvošā teorētiskā literatūra un tajā piedāvātie definēšanas veidi un struktūras.